NASM'S HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT MESSERSCHMITT Bf 109G

JULY 2025 · Vol.61/No.7

AIR CLASSICS

Where History Flies

BATTLE OVER HUNGARY

PUMA SQUADRON MESSERSCHMITTS AMBUSH 82nd FIGHTER GROUP LIGHTNINGS

STARFLIGHT

UNIQUE MONSTED-VINCENT MV-1

FORGOTTEN CROSSING

SMITH & BRONTE TRANSPACIFIC FLIGHT

"FILL 'ER UP!"

MORE AMERICAN AVIATION ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

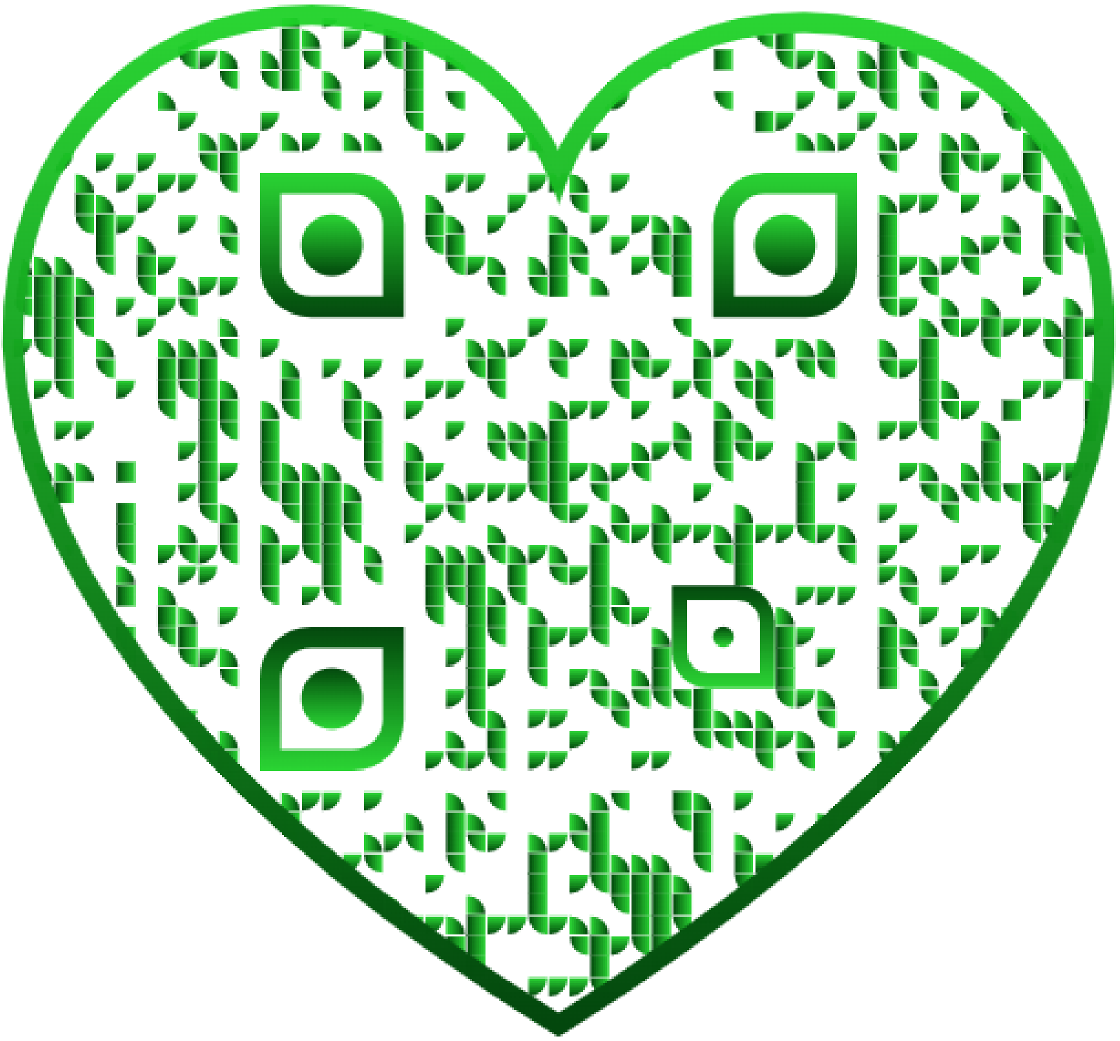
EXPANDED WARBIRD & CLASSIC REPORT

VINTAGE NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

U.S./CANADA $9.99

0 74666 02558 5 07

www.challengeweb.com



34th Annual

WORLD WAR II WEEKEND

JUNE 6, 7, 8, 2025

A Gathering of Warbirds

HL N
Flying Dutchman

Original Artwork-David Ails

Featuring 80 WWII Aircraft, 1,500 Reenactors, 200 Military Vehicles, Entertainers, 3 Big Bands, WWII era Special Guests, 250 Military Flea Market Vendors, Over 20 acres of WWII Encampments.

Mid Atlantic Air Museum

110 Air Museum Drive, Reading, PA 19605
610-372-7333 www.maam.org

YANKS
AIR MUSEUM

Bell P-63
Kingcobra

FROM CATS TO COBRAS!
YANKS AIR MUSEUM HAS IT ALL

When visiting Yanks Air Museum, make sure you check out our collection of CATS — and, no, we do not mean our pet "hangar cats" that are always on the prowl!

We mean the Wildcat, Hellcat, Panther, Cougar, Tiger, and Tomcat that are restored and on display. This is one of the largest collections of Grumman Cats anywhere in the world.

When it comes to COBRAS, we have the ultra-rare Airacobra, Kingcobra, and Huey Cobra along with dozens of other beautifully restored aircraft.

Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat

Grumman F-14 Tomcat

MAKE SURE TO VISIT OUR RESTORATION FACILITY AND TOUR OUR AMAZING "BONEYARD" OF FUTURE RESTORATION PROJECTS

Bell P-39 Airacobra

Check out our great wedding venue!

Have your next event at Yanks!

Grumman
F4F Wildcat

WHERE THE LEGENDS FLY ON!

YANKS AIR MUSEUM AT HISTORIC CHINO AIRPORT
15121 Stearman Drive, Chino, California 91710

Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 am-4:00 pm, closed Sunday, Mondays and Major Holidays

909-597-1735
www.YanksAir.org

Lockheed 12 photo by
Michael Malak Photography

Contents

JULY 2025
VOLUME 61 / NUMBER 7

Features

32 **“FILL ‘ER UP!”**
Part Three of our series on vintage American roadside gas stations and restaurants that featured an aviation theme / by Adam Stanton

40 **BATTLE OVER HUNGARY**
How the elite pilots of Hungary’s Puma squadron used their Messerschmitt Bf 109Gs to attack the Lockheed Lightnings of the 82nd Fighter Group / by Steve Blake

46 **COLORS OF WAR**
Drawing upon the extensive photo files at Challenge Publications, we present another selection of color WWII images / by Michael O’Leary

54 **STARFLIGHT SAGA**
Utilizing four engines, the Monsted-Vincent MV-1 hoped to revolutionize post-war aviation / by Howard Carter

COVER:
A USAAF instructor explains the bombardier position in a Beech AT-11 Kansan to student bombardiers at a Texas base during WWII. Fitted with a Norden bombsight, the AT-11 was capable of dropping 100-pound practice bombs from its internal bomb bay, which can be seen under the fuselage. During the war, the USAAF trained over 45,000 bombardiers and around 90% of that number received their training with the Kansan. During 1943, the USAAF established a minimum proficiency standard of 22% hits on target for trainees. Typical combat training missions took continuous evasive action within a ten-mile radius of the target with straight and level final target approaches that lasted no longer than 60 seconds. After 30 September 1943, the AT-11 usually carried a Norden bombsight and a C-1 automatic pilot, which allowed the student to guide the aircraft during the bomb run. (USAAF)

THESE PAGES:
Patrick O’Kelly displays the classic lines of his MiG 17. Registered N1713P, this aircraft was built under license by WSK-Mielec in Poland as a Lim-5 and flew with the Polish Air Force before being exported to the USA. Photography by Michael O’Leary

Society of AIR RACING HISTORIANS GOLDEN PYLONS

Departments

6 MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

8 WARBIRD & CLASSIC REPORT
Expanded department features details on the NASM's newly-refinished Bf 109G / by Doug Fisher

24 LOG ENTRIES
Examining the little-known Smith and Bronte transpacific flight to Hawaii in 1927 / by Mark Bingham

84 FRIDAY NIGHT OLDIES
Rare Kodachromes of surplus ex-military aircraft / by Doug Fisher

92 DOWN MEMORY'S RUNWAY
Interesting American aircraft from aviation's glorious past / by Doug Fisher

94 AIRLINES
News and views from the readers of Air Classics

Editorial & Production Staff
Michael O'Leary • Publisher/Editor • *moleary2challenge@gmail.com*
Matt Rippetoe • Art Director
Susan Duprey • Production Manager • *ed@challengeweb,.com*
Roger Cain • Social Media Manager/Antique Aircraft Editor • *jollyrogercain@comcast.net*
Steve Cox • Artist in Residence • *stevecox21@hotmail.com*
Bruce Orriss • Aviation Films Editor • *bruceorriss@gmail.com*
Doug Fisher • Warbird and Classic Report Editor • *dougsfno@cogeco.ca*
Jim Larsen • Air Racing Editor • *filmandflight@yahoo.com*
Bruce Lockwood • Technical Editor • *lockwoodaviation@yahoo.com*
Philip Makanna • WWI Aviation Editor • *phil@ghosts.com*
Ralph M. Pettersen • Propliner Editor • *rmpettersen@gmail.com*
Joe Scheil • Jet Warbirds Editor • *pbydreams@aol.com*
Tim Weinschenker • Golden Pylons Editor • *pylonguy2003@yahoo.com*
Steve Whitby • Air Tanker Editor • *srwhtby@verizon.net*
Howard Carter, Keith Charlot, Jim Dunn, William T. Larkins, Gerald Liang, Norm Taylor, James Thompson, Marshall Wainwright, Mark Watt • Contributors

Editorial & Advertising Offices
AIR CLASSICS, 9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd., Chatsworth, CA 91311
Tel: 818.700.6868 (8:00-4:00 PST Mon.-Thurs.); FAX: 818.700.6282
E-mail: *mail@challengeweb.com*
Web: *www.challengemagazines.com*

Subscription Offices
AIR CLASSICS, PO Box 16149, North Hollywood, CA 91615
Tel: 818.286.3124
Toll-Free: 800.562.9182 (Continental US Only) (9-5 PST Mon.- Fri.)

www.challengeweb.com

PROUDLY PRINTED IN USA

AIR CLASSICS (ISSN 0002-2241) is published monthly by Challenge Publications, Inc., 9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd., Chatsworth, CA 91311.

Copyright ©2025 by Challenge Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in whole or in part may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher.
Send editorial and advertising material to 9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd., Chatsworth, CA 91311. Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All photos, artwork, and manuscripts must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed return envelope.
POSTMASTER — Send address changes to AIR CLASSICS, PO Box 16149, North Hollywood, CA 91615. Please give six to eight weeks advance notice of address change. Send old and new address plus recent mailing label, if available. Subscription rate: US and possessions, one year — $89.95; Canada, Mexico, and other foreign countries — $103.95 (US funds). Periodicals postage paid at Chatsworth, CA, and additional mailing offices.

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK — *facebook.com/airclassicsmagazine* • VISIT US ONLINE — *airclassicsmagazine.com*

MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Do you believe in luck? The word has several definitions along with modifications of definitions. One is a "success or failure apparently brought on by chance rather than through one's own actions" while another states "something regarded as bringing about or portending good or bad things." There are a number of other variations, but you get the general idea. In aviation, as well as life, the word is in constant play. "I was lucky to get that lotto number" or "luckily the car repair bill wasn't as much as I thought." In the first instance, a lotto number is probably strictly luck since zero talent is involved but in the second, the repair bill was probably pretty much a fixed cost so luck would not have entered into it. When it comes to aviation, most pilots will state they aren't superstitious, yet I would beg to disagree. Over the years, I have seen all sorts of actions taken by aviators that I would grade as falling into the category of superstition. I know pilots that have exacting rituals on how they will walk-around an aircraft to pre-flight the machine so nothing will fall to "luck." Others will comment while watching a crosswind landing by saying, "He was lucky to make that landing." While another might say, "I was lucky to pass that check-ride since I did not study that much." And so it goes.

Personally, I have my own little superstitions and rituals but when it comes to luck, I am not so sure. Sometimes I will say to a friend, "I was really lucky to get on that airline flight because it was overbooked" or "we really lucked out on the av gas price today." The subject of luck was brought home more recently during an air display. I was in a deep conversation with an associate as we had been interrupted a couple weeks previously and both of us wanted to complete our original thought process. A mutual friend came over and offered a plane ride, stating we would make just a couple circuits of the field. Since I had not been able to complete the conversation, I declined and said something about "next time." Around ten minutes later, the aircraft was a burning wreck near the runway. No one got out. Was it luck that I stayed and talked to my associate? I can't give a firm answer but it is certainly a thought that crosses my mind on an almost daily basis.

In our several articles in the last issue regarding the Doolittle Raiders, we mentioned that the last surviving Raider, Dick Cole, had the honor of naming the new Northrop B-21 stealth bomber as the "Raider." At Challenge, we have a fair amount of interaction with the current USAF and sometimes attend press events put on by the service. The subject of stealth aircraft came up this month via an information packet supplied to us by the USAF. Anyone that follows the news knows that the last administration, as well as the current one, has faced problems with Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea area. The Houthis are a primitive lot of muslim fanatics that are supplied with weapons from Iran. Using missiles and drones fired from Yemen (a stinking fourth-world hell hole), damage has been inflicted on vital shipping passing through the area — so much so that many companies are now making huge, and costly, diversions to avoid that particular stretch of coastline. The Houthis have continued these attacks on ships in the Red Sea (through which 15% of global seaborne trade traveled) despite repeated American aerial attacks.

Just weeks into the current administration, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth dispatched an extra air wing of Navy F-35s to Jordan in response to continued attacks. He has also extended the deployment of the *Harry S. Truman* Carrier Strike Group in the Red Sea and announced that it is being joined by the USS *Carl Vinson*. The Pentagon has also sent at least two vintage A-10 Thunderbolt IIs from the Idaho ANG into the combat zone — the A-10 is one of our most cost-effective weapons yet it has never been liked by the USAF and probably should have come under the control of the Army or Marine Corps. The USAF would like to spend its money on more glamorous aircraft. Sadly, an average of one A-10 a week is now being flown to the boneyard at Davis-Monthan AFB.

A satellite photo released on 2 April showed six Northrop B-2 Spirit stealth bombers parked on the ramp at Camp Thunder Bay on our remote outpost on the island of Diego Garcia. Another had broken down in Hawaii but apparently was soon on its way to Diego Garcia. The B-2 is rarely used in action because each bomber costs approximately $1 billion. Spirits have dropped bombs on Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Libya. They are based at Whiteman AFB in Missouri and last year a B-2 was used to attack underground Houthi bases.

The deployment of seven of the B-2s is unprecedented. It means that roughly half of the USAF B-2 fleet capable of carrying out combat missions deployed to Diego Garcia. The USAF has only 19 B-2s out of 21 built (a projected build of 132 airframes was reduced to just 21 because of the collapse of the Cold War) but only about 55% of the Spirits were listed as mission-capable in 2024, according to the USAF. This is a dreadful percentage that was allowed by the previous administration and a figure that the current government needs to correct.

Will the B-2s be used to attack Houthi "command posts"? Such a post is usually a mud hut. Each B-2 can carry two Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP) bombs that weigh about 30,000 pounds each. Given the designation GBU-57, this weapon has the nickname of "bunker buster" and is what would presumably be utilized on Iranian nuclear facilities that are reportedly dispersed and buried deep underground. When Iran was attacked in 2003, the then-current deep penetration bombs did not reach deep enough nor do enough damage. Details on the MOP have been classified but as of 2011 the USAF had received 16 of the weapons that can apparently penetrate to 200 feet.

So, are the B-2s on Diego Garcia for the Houthis or for the Iranians? The Houthis are an armed political and religious group which champions Yemen's Shia muslim minority, known as the Zaidis. They declare themselves to be part of the Iranian-led "axis of resistance" against Israel, the US, and the wider West — along with armed groups such as Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement. Formally known as the Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), the group emerged in the 1990s and takes its name from the movement's late founder, Hussein al-Houthi. The current leader is his brother, Abdul Malik al-Houthi. Neighboring Saudi Arabia fears that the Houthis would take over Yemen and make it a satellite of its rival, Iran. In the recent fighting in Yemen, approximately 160,000 people have been killed with a claimed four million displaced.

Is this massive build-up of American technology in the form of super carrier battle groups and B-2 stealth bombers just a show of force or is something more concrete planned to rid the world of these pests? Reading the news, we know that there has been somewhat of a purge of high-ranking officers from all services and we can only hope this is for the good as America returns to a much more solid form of force projection. Again, I have to admire Jimmy Doolittle and his Raiders taking off on an impossible mission to strike a blow against one of the deadliest forces the world has ever seen. Today's USAF has a capability of which Jimmy and his men could have only dreamed. What they did have on hand was unlimited daring, skill, and courage. I hope our current forces (and government) have those American traits for they will certainly be needed. Along with a little luck.

MICHAEL O'LEARY/PUBLISHER
CHALLENGE PUBLICATIONS
moleary2challenge@gmail.com

NASM'S HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT MESSERSCHMITT Bf 109G
JULY 2025 • Vol.61/No.7
AIR CLASSICS
Where History Flies
BATTLE OVER HUNGARY
PUMA SQUADRON MESSERSCHMITTS AMBUSH 82nd FIGHTER GROUP LIGHTNINGS
STARFLIGHT
UNIQUE MONSTED-VINCENT MV-1
FORGOTTEN CROSSING
SMITH & BRONTE TRANSPACIFIC FLIGHT
RESTORING THE LAST NAA B-25B DOOLITTLE RAIDER
DOOLITTLE RAID
TED WILLIAMS
KEYSTONE LOCKHEEDS
BY WESTERN TO NORMANDY
GANG OF ALL-AMERICANS
AUBREY STANHOPE: ONE WAR AND THREE AIR FORCES
LAST GREAT AMERICAN FLYING BOAT
"FILL 'ER UP!"
PROPLINER HAVEN
COLORS OF WAR
ONE WAR, THREE AIR FORCES
DAWN OF A HELLCAT
AIR LEGENDS FOUNDATION
MUSTANG NAMED FRANCIS DELL
VINTAGE WINGS OVER OREGON
KEEPING THE AIRACOBRAS FLYING
FIGHTER PILOT REUNION

HEAD INTO A NEW YEAR WITH AIR CLASSICS!

60th ANNIVERSARY 1964/2024 AIR CLASSICS

EVERY MONTH: THE VERY BEST IN AVIATION HISTORY

Now celebrating its 61st Anniversary, AIR CLASSICS is North America's LARGEST selling aviation history magazine as well as the world's OLDEST in that field.

WE OFFER REAL AVIATION HISTORY WITH NO REVISIONISM AND NO APOLOGIES!

GET AIR CLASSICS EVERY MONTH JUST $79.95

FOR TWELVE ISSUES (just $6.67 per issue)

○ **Please rush my subscription of 12 issues for just $79.95**

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

____

CITY ____________________

STATE __________ ZIP __________

SPECIAL! **Give a GIFT SUBSCRIPTION!**

○ **Sign Up a Friend for Just $74.95 — A $5 Discount!**

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

____

CITY ____________________

STATE ACCOUNT NUMBER __________ ZIP __________

○ Payment Enclosed

EXPIRATION DATE

○ VISA

________/________

○ MasterCard

SIGNATURE

○ Renewal

○ New

SEND TO: SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT
CHALLENGE PUBLICATIONS, INC.
P O BOX 2474
Chatsworth, CA 91311-2474 USA

AIR CLASSICS For subscriptions mailed outside the US, please add $36 for a 12-issue subscription. Payment must be in US funds only.

WARBIRD & CLASSIC REPORT

KEEP 'EM FLYING!

COMPILED BY DOUG FISHER

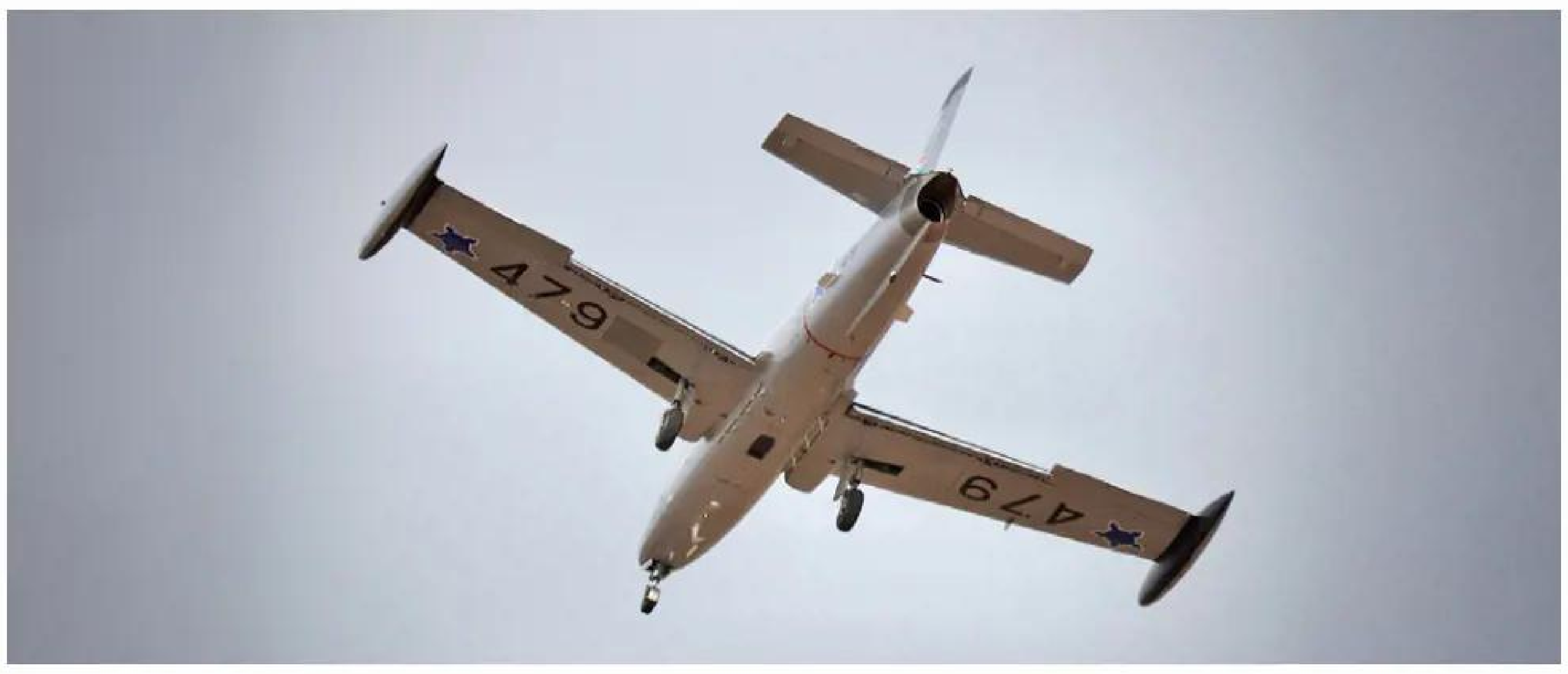
ZU-IMP
479
MED AIR
79

Impala ZU-IMP wore a basic South African Air Force color scheme.

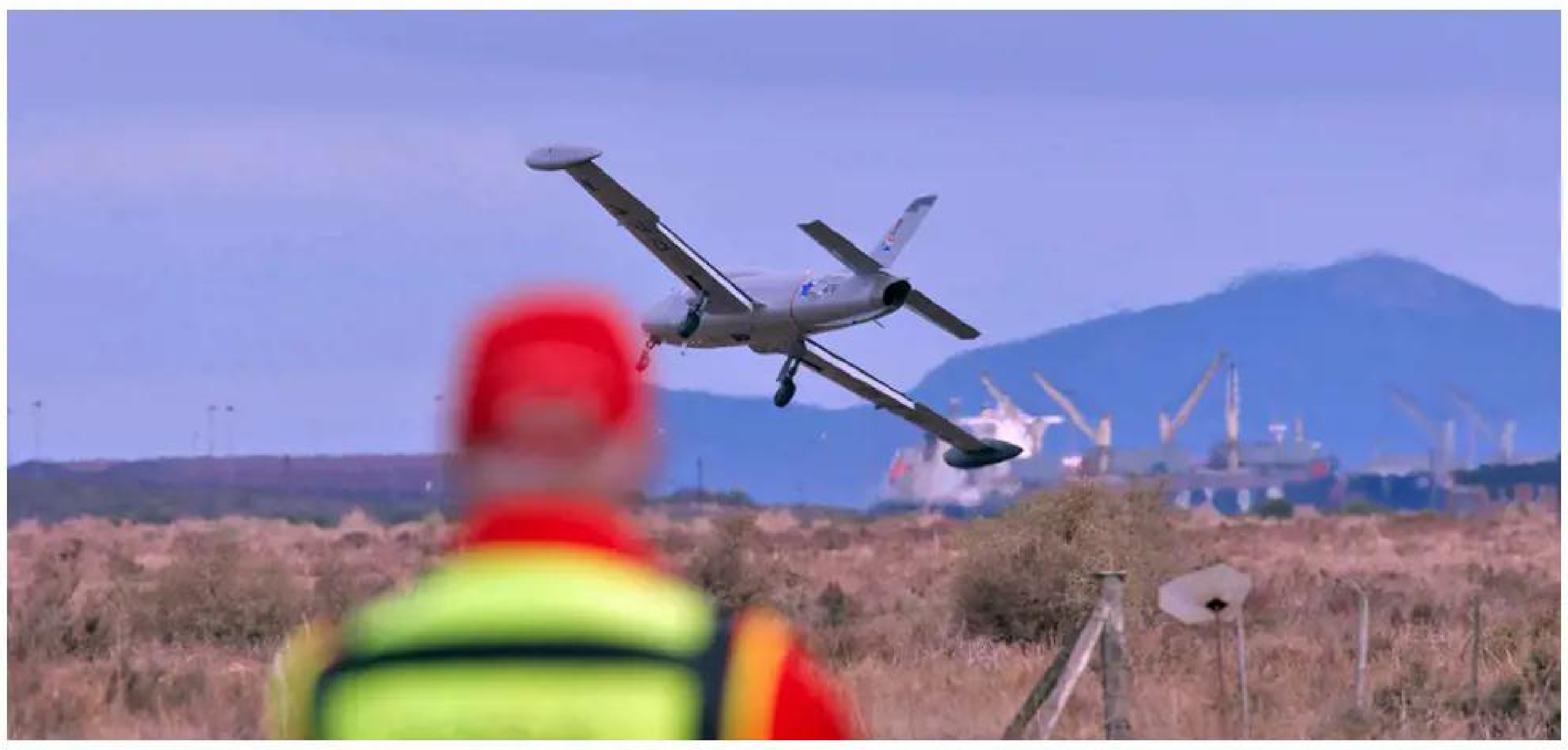
SOUTH AFRICAN IMPALA DOWN

The South African Air Force (SAAF) made extensive use of the Atlas MB.326M Impala, a single turbojet two-seat tandem trainer that also had limited weapons capability. The aircraft was developed by Aermacchi in Italy and was very successful with over 800 built. A license was obtained to build the aircraft in South Africa and production started in 1966. The SAAF received 40 Italian-built jets and about 125 MB.326Ms were built locally by Atlas Aircraft Corporation. Seven examples of the MB.326K were purchased for attack duties and another 15 were assembled from kits while about 78 were built by Atlas as the Impala Mk. II. The SAAF aircraft received heavy armaments and were utilized in combat against the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola and Cuban expeditionary troops in Angola between 1975 and 1989. As a point of interest, the Mk. IIs were also used as interceptors when the Cubans had their ground supply route cut off. Attempting resupply, the Cubans launched Mi-24 helicopters escorted by MiG 17s. The Impalas jumped the helicopters and shot down six, which was a major victory for the SAAF. The type was also used by the SAAF's Silver Falcons display team.

On 22 March, James O'Connell was flying a surplus Impala with the civil registration ZU-IMP at the West Coast Airshow at Saldanha Bay Airfield. Apparently, an Impala has not flown in South Africa for a number of years and spectators were looking forward to the aerobatic display. The aircraft appeared to be under complete control through the display until one of the final maneuvers when it experienced a sudden loss of altitude and entered a steep dive before making contact with the ground. Airshow commentator Brian Emmenis described the accident: "He went into the dirty configuration with landing gear extended. He rolled the aircraft and turned the aircraft with the landing gear now up [NOTE: As can be seen in the photos, the gear and the flaps were down an instant before impact]. On coming out of it, one could clearly see that he was losing height. He went out towards the hangars — he was at that stage in a serious deep dive — and he went straight into the ground. There was no sign of an attempt to eject." O'Connell was listed as a decorated ex-SAAF pilot and experienced test pilot. Numerous examples of the SAAF Impalas were imported to Mojave Airport for utilization by the civilian test pilot school but few were assembled and flown. A 1993 accident involving a SAAF Impala that shed a wing during an airshow performance led to the retirement of the type from military service.



ZU-IMP during its final dive with flaps and gear lowered. It appears that aircraft was in a deep stall.



With right wing down, the Impala had leveled out of its dive but was descending at a very high rate of speed.

Wreckage was confined to a small area.

Still wearing its original Dutch serial of S-23, the Ryan was photographed under repair after its initial accident in Australia. Work was being done by Australian National Airways in Sydney.

Registered VH-AGO, the STM was photographed shortly before its 1967 accident.

UPSIDE-DOWN RYAN

On 22 March, Ryan STM-2 VH-AWG was landing at Melbourne-Tyabb Airport in Victoria, Australia, when it overturned. Powered by a Menasco Pirate C4S engine, the pilot of the aircraft managed to exit the plane on his own and had minor injuries. Designed for the wealthy sport pilot of the late 1930s, the Art Deco-styled trainer also found a ready military market as air forces attempted to increase their aircraft with the specter of world war. The Netherlands Government in Exile, located in New York City, had placed orders for 108 Ryan STM-2s between June and October 1940. The aircraft would constitute 60 examples for the Netherlands East Indies Army and 48 for the Netherlands Naval Air Service.

The disassembled aircraft were shipped to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) but by the time of the Japanese invasion on 8 December 1941, eight aircraft had been lost in accidents. More were lost during the Japanese advance. By January 1942, the situation had gotten much worse and the Dutch decided to ship the Ryans to Australia so that the training of pilots to fight the enemy could continue. At least 37 STMs (along with spare parts and damaged fuselages) were loaded onto the cargo vessel MS *Tjinegra* and it departed Sourabaya Naval Air Station in Java on 17 February. The ship arrived safely after avoiding Japanese aircraft and subs (it would be sunk four months later).

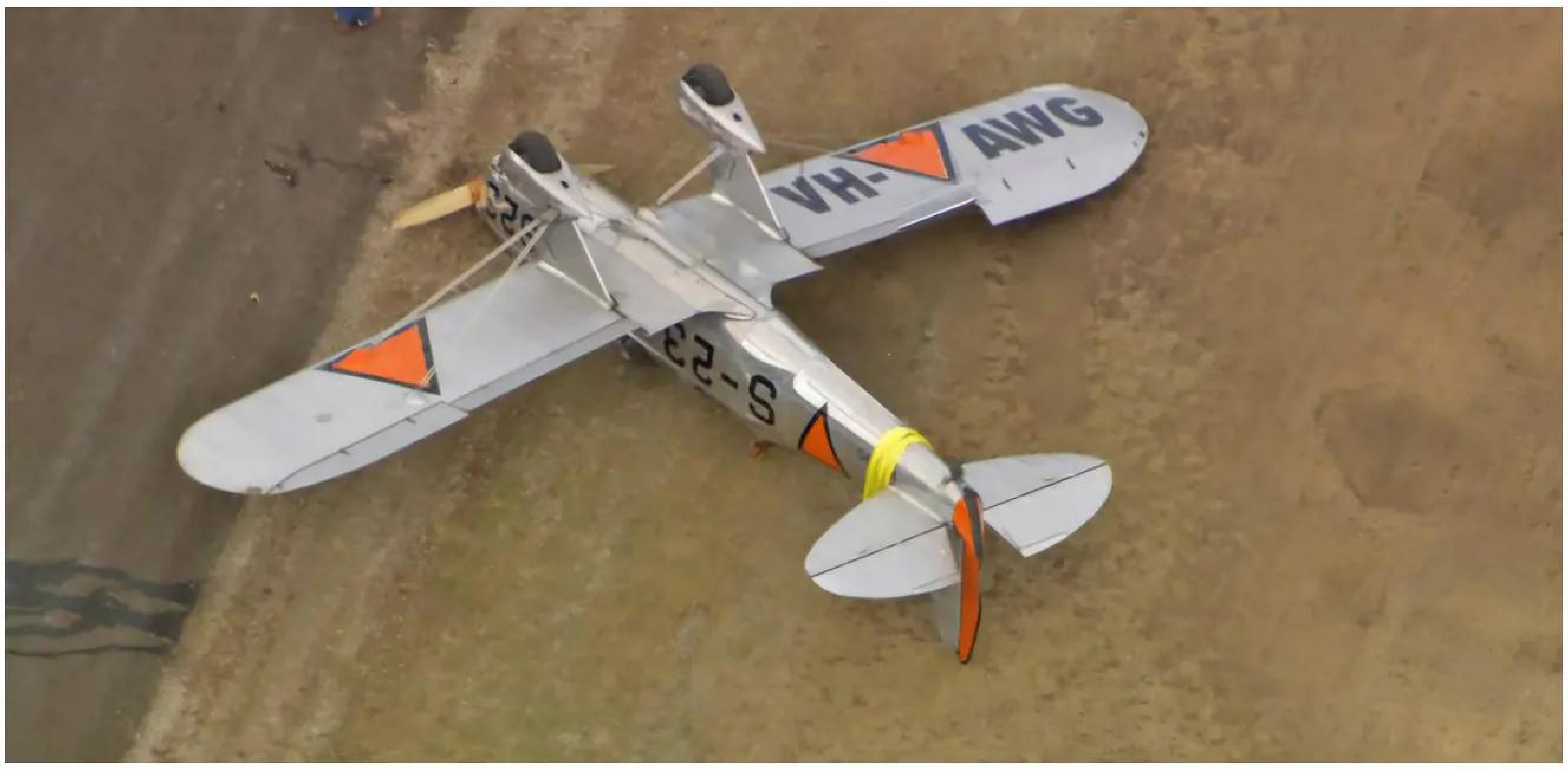
The assembled aircraft were quickly put to work but a deal was made that would see the training effort moved to the USA since facilities in Australia were slim and the threat of invasion was very real. At this point, there were 34 STMs and they were taken over by the Royal Australian Air Force with the designation Ryan Trainer with serials ranging from A50-1 to A50-34. The RAAF rated the condition of the aircraft as poor and work started to bring them up to operational standard. Once that was done, most were used for general flying duties and not training and the majority were retired by 1944.

The STMs were among the first RAAF types to be made available by the newly-formed Commonwealth Disposal Commission. One firm purchased all the available inventory although some had been damaged by a tornado that hit the airfield where they were stored. About 20 aircraft were converted to civilian use over the next two years.

Our subject aircraft initially received the Dutch military serial S-23 and during June 1942, it was taken over by the RAAF as A50-11. However, in just a matter of days in was heavily damaged. On 29 June 1942, the aircraft (still in Dutch markings) was being flown by P/O H. Green when he experienced a fuel failure that resulted in a forced landing. The plane was sent off for repairs but these took two years. After that, it seems to have gone to an air gunnery school before being offered for sale. It was struck off charge on 5 April 1945 and allocated the civil registration VH-AGD on 21 November of that year. The aircraft had a total time of just 448 hours. From that point, it flew on and off until 15 October 1967 when the engine failed on takeoff. The pilot was fined for flying an aircraft with an expired registration and the wreck then passed through several owners. By June 2000, it was ready for a post-restoration flight with the new registration VH-AWG. The Ryan was finished in its original Dutch markings and it is presumed the aircraft will be rebuilt.

RYAN
VH-AWG
S-23
S23

Ryan VH-AWG in its most recent markings.



The Ryan after its accident.

David Hayman piloting MiG 21UM NX317DM over Rockford, Illinois. (Keith Charlot)

MIGHTY MONGOL

One of the most produced Cold War Soviet fighter aircraft was the Mikoyan Gurevich MiG 21 series of high-performance interceptors. The first MiG 21s were given the NATO reporting name of Fishbed and a stunning 10,645 examples were built in the USSR alone. The type was also constructed under license in Czechoslovakia (194 aircraft) and India (657). It should be noted that the Indian Air Force has had an incredibly poor safety record and along with locally built aircraft, the Indians purchased more MiG 21s from the Soviets and over 1200 examples were brought into the IAF inventory. Some 170 IAF MiG 21 pilots have been killed and over half of the inventory has been lost in crashes that also claimed 40 civilians on the ground. The Chinese also developed their own variant of the MiG 21, which was designated J-7. Large numbers were built and the type was exported to many countries.

Over 60 air forces operate or have operated the type. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that numerous examples of the MiG 21 were imported into the United States, **reports Keith Charlot**. First flown during June 1955, many countries were more than pleased to exchange their retired airframes for American dollars. Since the MiG 21 series started appearing on the US civil register during the 1980s, the number of operating civil aircraft has gone up and down. Several MiG 21s are being operated by companies that do contract work with the US military. MiG 21UM c/n 516913056 last flew with the Polish Air Force as 3056. One of a number of Polish MiGs brought into the States, this aircraft was given the civil registration of NX317DM. Currently operated by G-Loc Fighters in Illinois, the MiG 21UM was built as a two-seat training variant of the MiG 21MF (Fishbed-J) and was given the NATO reporting name of Mongol-B.

The MiG 21UM was built as a trainer variant of the MiG 21MF interceptor. (Keith Charlot)

PLATINUM
FIGHTER SALES

OFFERED FOR SALE

THE STARS LOOK DOWN

1943 NORTH AMERICAN TP-51C
s/n 42-103293 N251MX

Swamp Fox
C5-A

Photo Credit: Scott Slocum

1944 NORTH AMERICAN P-51D "SWAMP FOX"
s/n 44-74202 Reg: N5420V

Cripes A'Mighty
PE

Photo Credit: Scott Slocum

1944 NORTH AMERICAN P-51D "CRIPES A MIGHTY"
S/n 44-74813 N151BW

1945 NORTH AMERICAN P-51D
s/n 45-11571 N51T

1945 GRUMMAN FM-2 WILDCAT
Bu. Num 86680 Reg: N11FE

1952 DOUGLAS AD-4NA
s/n 126965 N965AD

Photo Credit: Scott Slocum

1974 CANADAIR CF-5D
S/n 116840 N840MQ

U.S. AIR FORC
S
434062

1944 DOUGLAS A-26B
s/n 44-34062 N167B

Contact: **1.800.210.1951 • sales@platinumfighters.com**

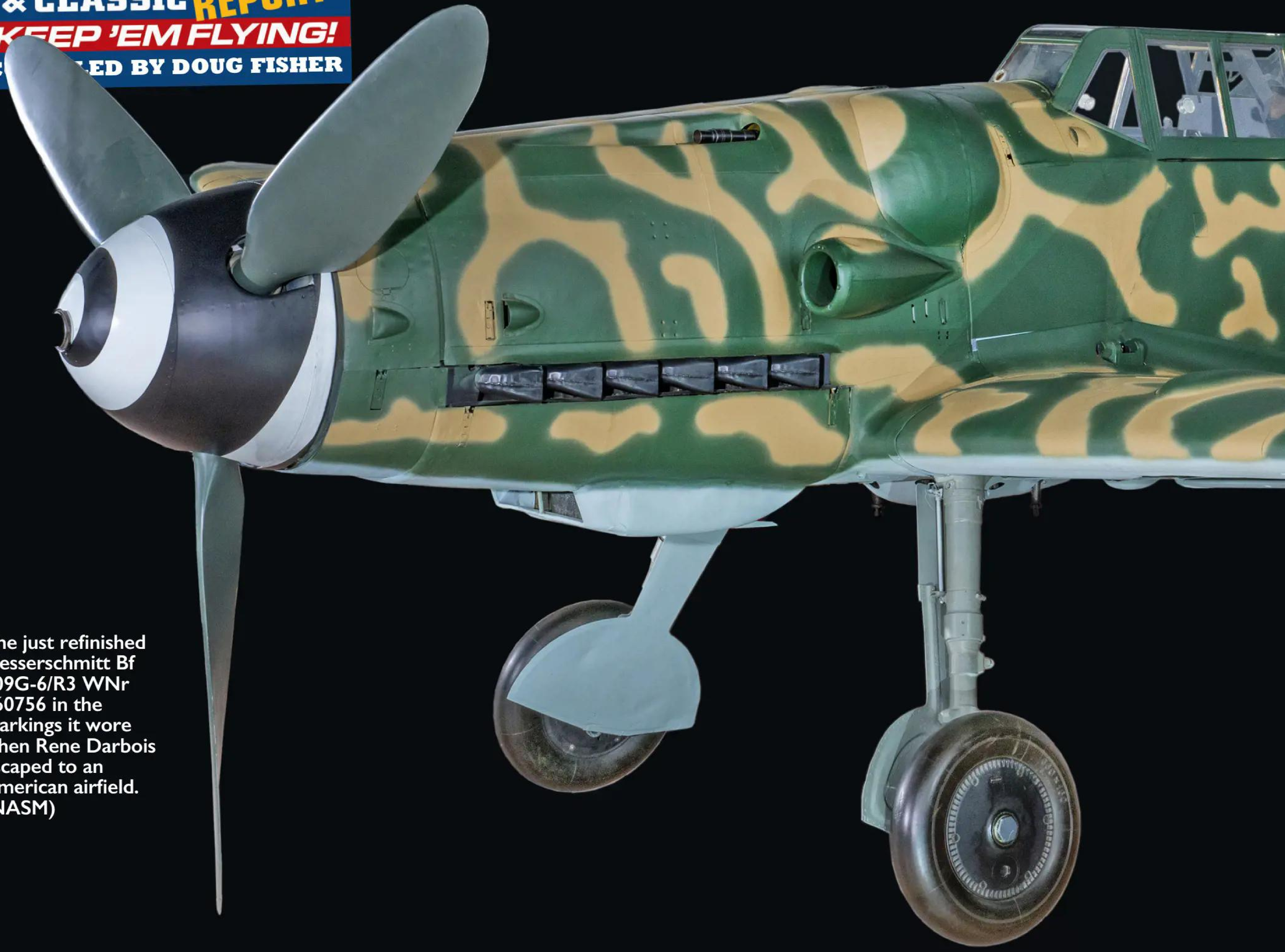
PLATINUM FIGHTER SALES *Purveyors of the World's Finest Historic Aircraft*

www.platinumfighters.com

GUSTAV'S RETURN

A RARE MESSERSCHMITT HAS BEEN RETURNED TO ITS ORIGINAL COLORS

BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



The just refinished Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6/R3 WNr 160756 in the markings it wore when Rene Darbois escaped to an American airfield. (NASM)

In the aircraft restoration business, nothing ever stays the same. What is hailed one year as an incomparable restoration will, in a few years' time, be subjected to criticism and debate on "how" the plane should have been restored. Restoration is an apples and oranges game when it comes to whether the aircraft will be flown or whether it will be forever a static display. Over the decades, I have been fortunate to witness many, many restorations. For example, when Mustangs began to be restored during the 1970s little to no thought was given to the fact the airframe might have "original" markings. What does the term "original" mean when applied to these 1970s restorations?

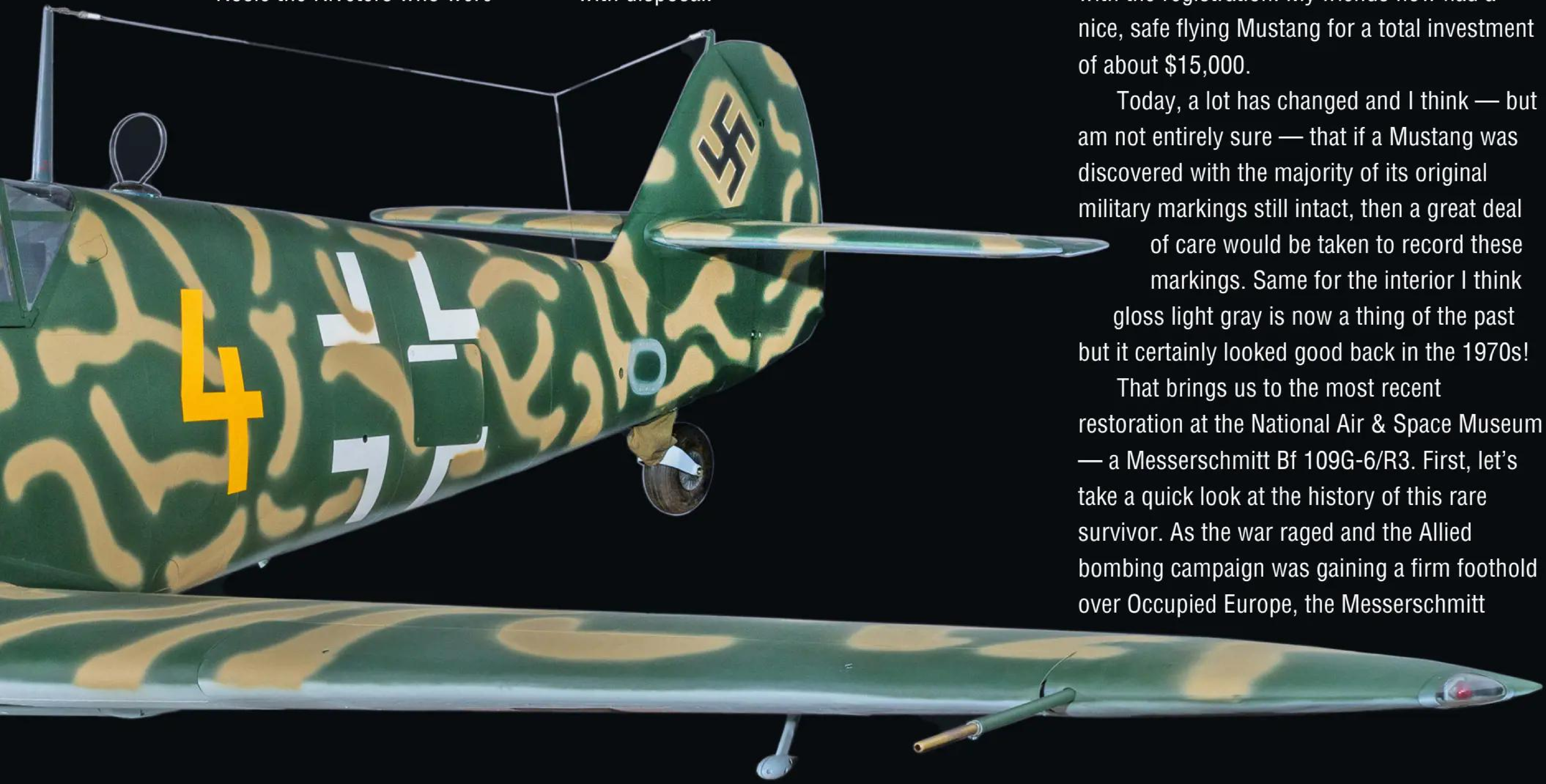
I will give one example: During 1974 an airframe that had not flown since being sold surplus by the USAF in 1958 was wheeled into a hangar at Van Nuys Airport. The plane had suffered from a couple decades of outside storage but was in relatively good condition. The exterior of the aircraft still had the majority of its Texas Air National Guard markings and stenciling along with the civil registration number that had been applied very crudely with a paint brush. My friends that owned the aircraft began yanking out tubing, pulling the engine, and demating the fuselage from the wing. At that point, I noticed that there were many markings on the interior of the fuselage. Some of these were applied to the aluminum in pencil lead or grease pencil and indicated items that needed to be added or fixed prior to USAAF delivery.

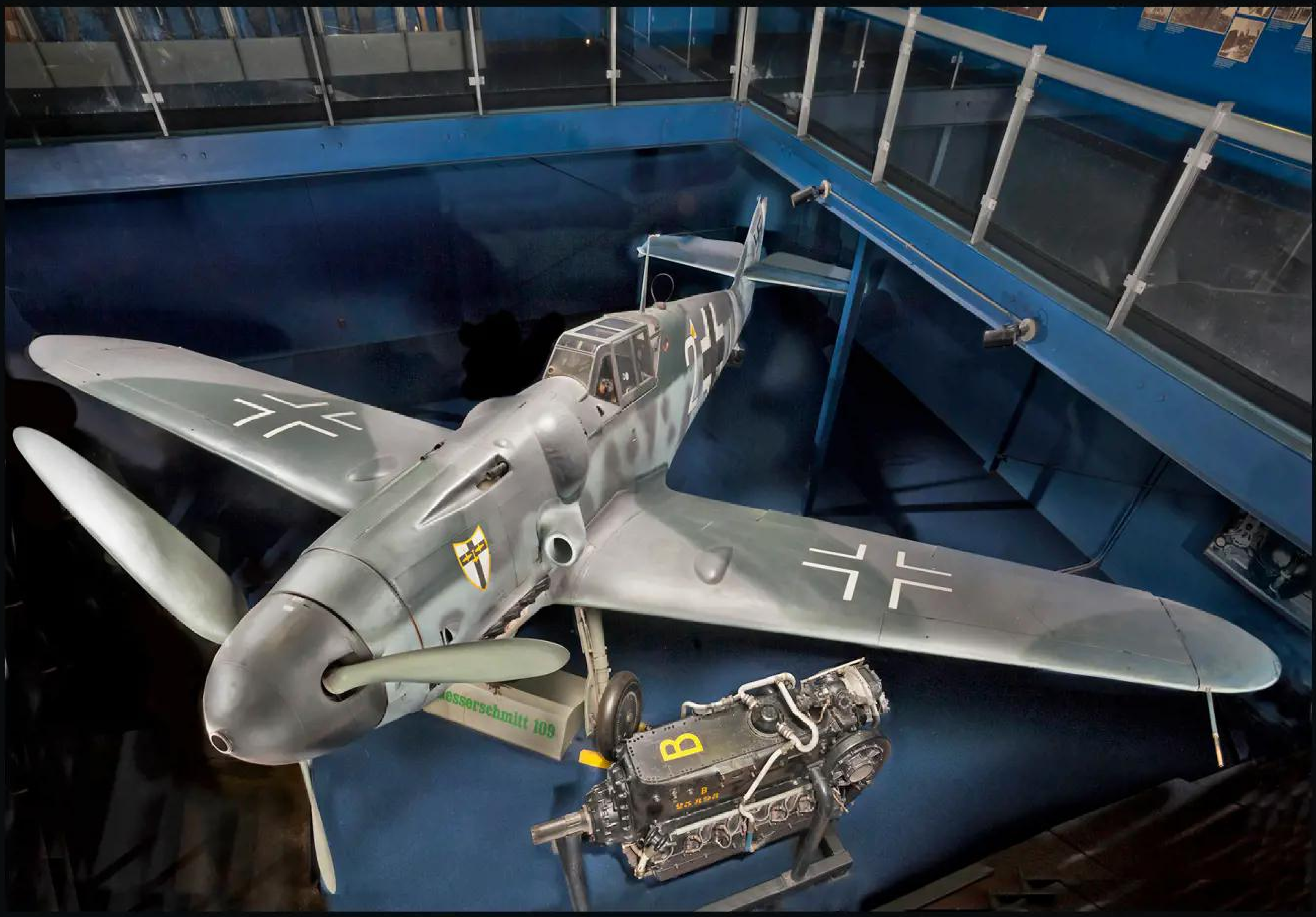
I found these most interesting. My friends, not so much so. With the primitive camera I had at the time, I attempted to photograph these markings — there were even names of the people that worked on the airframe including the names and addresses of several Rosie the Riveters who were probably hoping to make contact with a handsome USAAF pilot. There were also numerous original airframe bits and pieces that the owners did not want — armor plate, some instruments, placards, and even a canvas bag in the rear fuselage that had the entire paperwork history from the day the fighter was built to the day it was delivered to surplus storage. My friends did not want the material and were probably glad when I hauled it all away since they did not have to then bother with disposal.

To make a long story short, the plane was completely stripped — inside and out. Away went all the original markings. The gutted airframe was then carefully hosed out to get rid of any stripper and when the appropriate time came, the entire interior was sprayed light gloss gray. This seemed to be the color of choice during that time period and when the airplane was finally ready to be put back together, the airframe was brightened and some colorful civilian trim was added along with the registration. My friends now had a nice, safe flying Mustang for a total investment of about $15,000.

Today, a lot has changed and I think — but am not entirely sure — that if a Mustang was discovered with the majority of its original military markings still intact, then a great deal of care would be taken to record these markings. Same for the interior I think gloss light gray is now a thing of the past but it certainly looked good back in the 1970s!

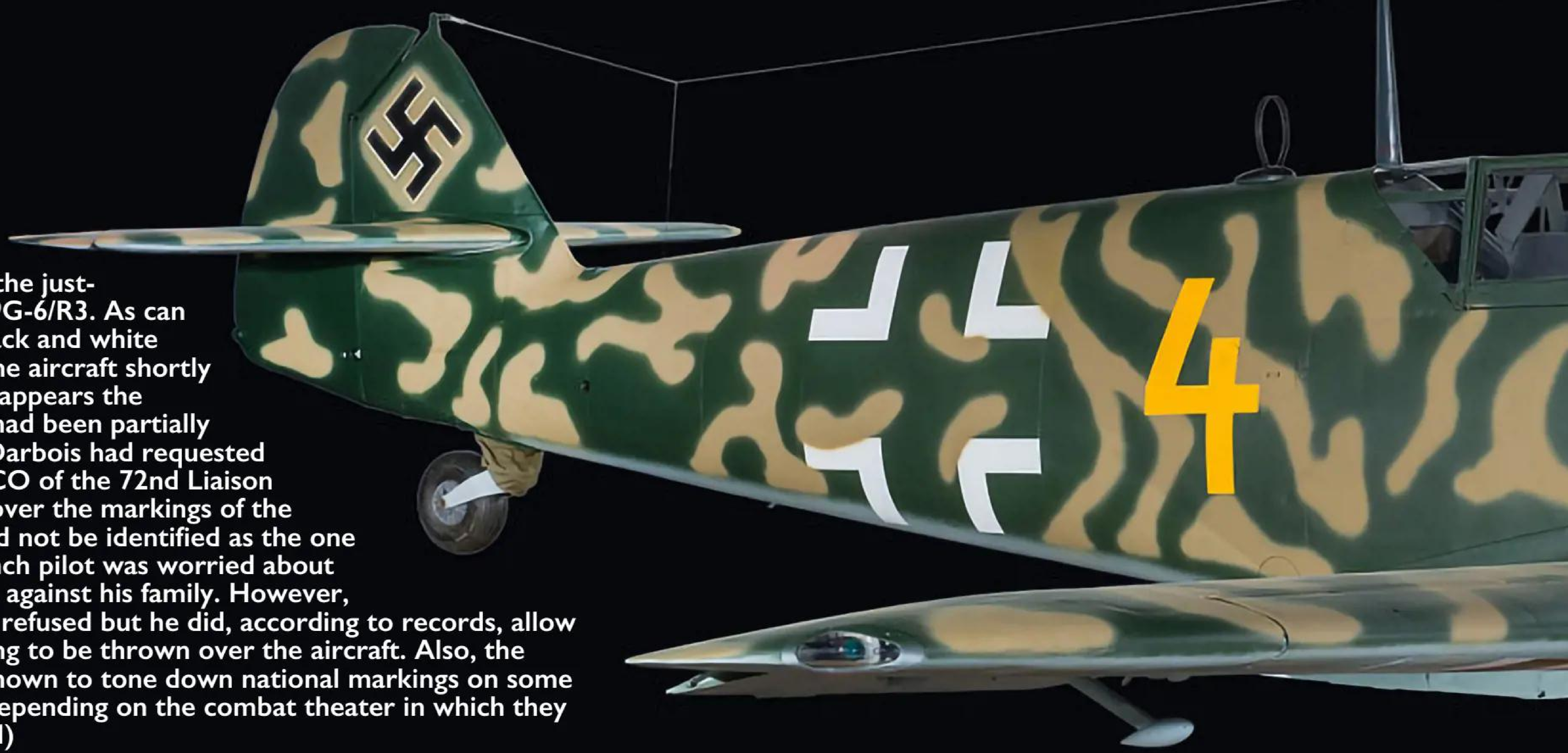
That brings us to the most recent restoration at the National Air & Space Museum — a Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6/R3. First, let's take a quick look at the history of this rare survivor. As the war raged and the Allied bombing campaign was gaining a firm foothold over Occupied Europe, the Messerschmitt





For nearly 50 years, the Bf 109G was in this rather nice, but inaccurate for the aircraft, camouflage scheme. (NASM)

A young Rene Darbois as a *Luftwaffe* pilot during WWII.



Another view of the just-completed Bf 109G-6/R3. As can be seen in the black and white photographs of the aircraft shortly after it landed, it appears the national insignia had been partially obscured. Rene Darbois had requested that Maj. Percy, CO of the 72nd Liaison Squadron, paint over the markings of the aircraft so it could not be identified as the one he flew. The French pilot was worried about German reprisals against his family. However, Percy apparently refused but he did, according to records, allow for canvas sheeting to be thrown over the aircraft. Also, the Germans were known to tone down national markings on some of their aircraft depending on the combat theater in which they operated. (NASM)

Darbois in the cockpit of a Bf 109G and ready for a *Luftwaffe* mission.

factory at Regensburg completed a batch of Bf 109Gs with WNrs 160745 through 160770. These planes received the factory codes (which were temporary) of KT+LA through KT+LZ that were neatly applied with black paint. Bf 109G-6/R3 WNr 160756 had the coding KT+LL when the fighter was ready for delivery to the *Luftwaffe* in late 1943 and at this point the *Luftwaffe* was sorely in need of all the fighter aircraft it could receive.

To the average American aviation enthusiast, the German airframe classification can be a bit challenging but what the G-6/R3 designation meant was that the aircraft was delivered as a long-range photo-reconnaissance variant with associated camera gear and ports installed at the factory. It also had the ability to mount two 300-liter fuel tanks under the wings in an effort to extend the range of the notoriously short-legged 109. It had the needed equipment for the installation of what was called a sand filter over its oil cooler. This was for assignment in the parts of

Preparing the *Gustav* to be stripped for its new paint. (NASM)

Stripping off the paint that had been on the Messerschmitt since the mid-1970s.

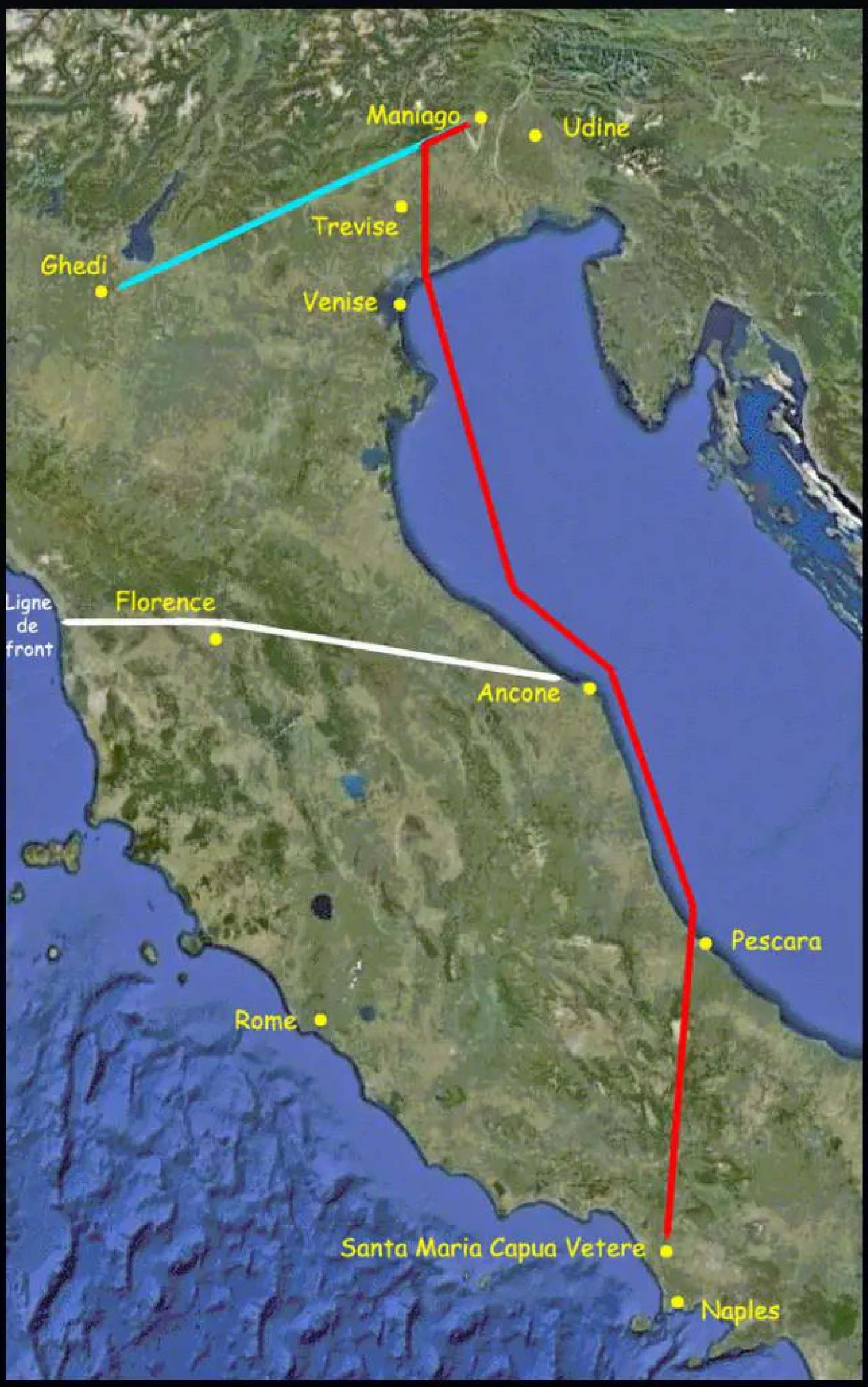
the world where the airfields were dry, unimproved, and quite dusty.

When accepted, the photo-recon fighter was assigned to *Jagdgeschwader 4 (JG 4)*. The unit was operating from the rugged airfields of Romania and was attempting to guard the vital oil fields from Allied air attacks. As with so many *Luftwaffe* fighter units, JG 4 was often on the move and it was transferred to northern Italy in the hope of stemming the increasing flow of heavy bombers flying from the south to attack targets throughout Europe (see "Battle Over Hungary" elsewhere in this issue). At some point, the aircraft's standard factory camouflage scheme was overpainted in a dark tan and green camouflage that was probably very hastily applied in the field. It also picked up the code of *Yellow 4*.

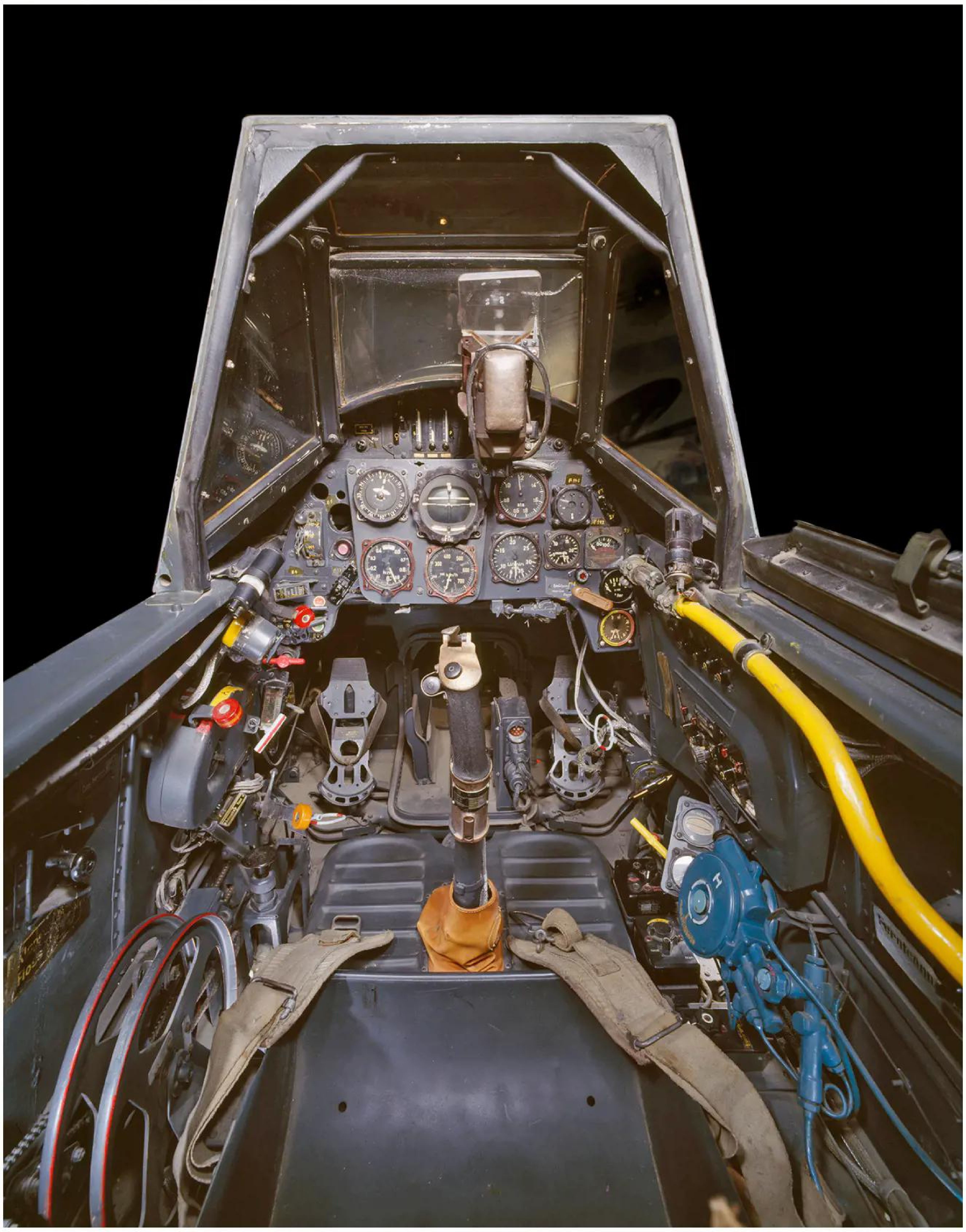
The aircraft had survived nine months of action, and that was an impressive record, when 16 Messerschmitts of *JG 4* were ordered to depart from Maniago in northern Italy and fly to Ghedi, which was around 50 miles east of the major city of Milan. The reason is unclear but it was probably to reinforce attacks against Allied heavy bombers. WNr 160756 was part of a loose formation flight of 16 fighters and this is where the story gets more interesting. At the aircraft's controls was *Unteroffizier* Rene Darbois and, as his name implies, he was a Frenchman who joined the *Luftwaffe*. It is a bit forgotten today, but many Frenchmen (and Europeans of other nationalities) joined the German fighting forces. Some did so because they believed in the German cause while others reasoned that it was better than being sent to a work or prison camp.

Darbois was an interesting character. Born on 23 October 1923 in the city of Metz, as a young man he became very interested in anything to do with mechanical objects, especially aircraft. The part of France in which lived had a complex political history. Alsace-Lorriane had much of its territory taken by the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War

Applying the new colors. Originally, the aircraft had been camouflaged in the field with probably whatever paint was available.



The escape route flown by Rene Darbois.


The beautifully authentic cockpit of the Bf 109G-6/R3. (NASM)

(1870/71) and parts of this were given back to France following the Great War.

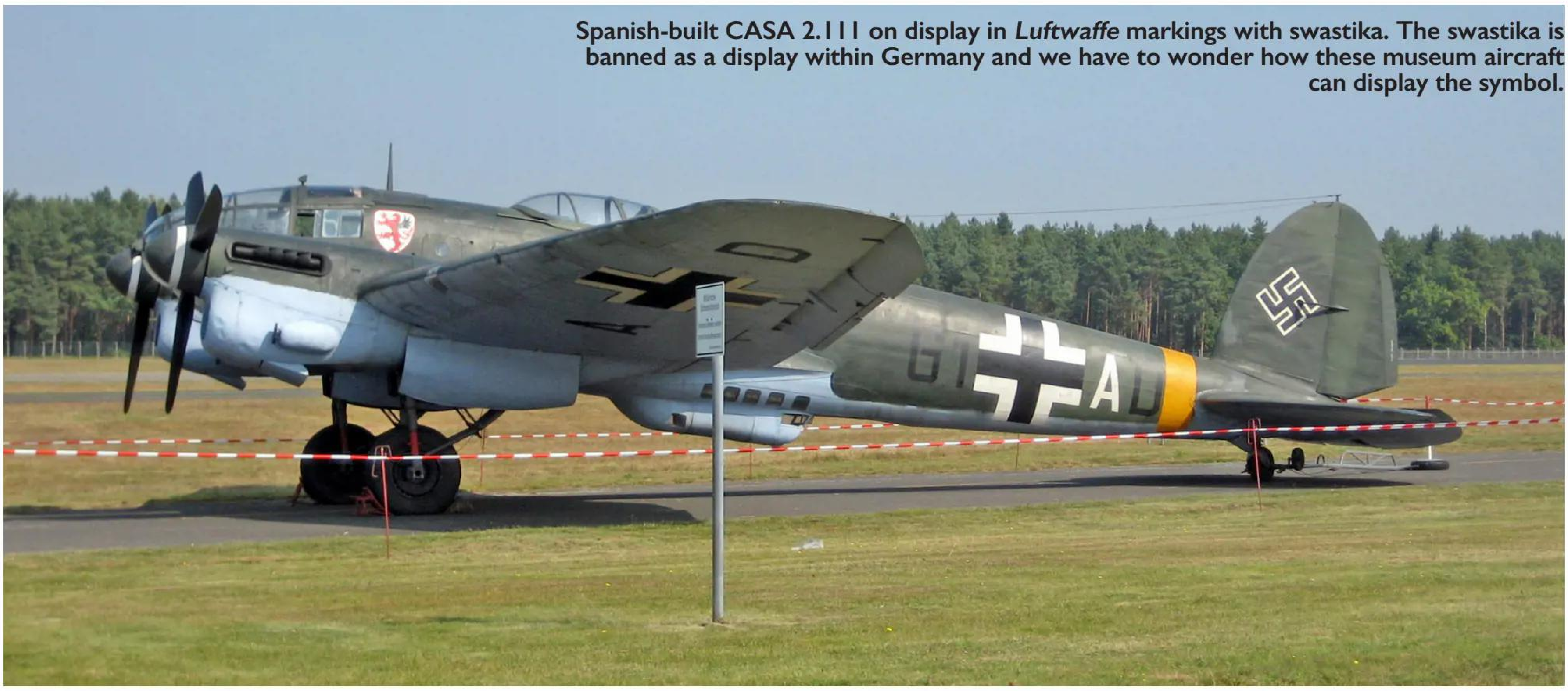
Hitler, as he gained more power during the 1930s, had his eye on this considerable chunk of real estate since he figured it belonged to Germany. Following France's military defeat in 1940, the Germanization of the area became even more intense and young men were subject to the German draft. Apparently, Darbois had no love of the Germans but he figured that if he could get into the *Luftwaffe* and learn to fly, then he might be of future use to France. Enlisting, by 1942 he became a skilled glider pilot and was greatly admired by his fellow glider enthusiasts. On 2 March 1943, he received his mobilization orders for the *Luftwaffe* so that he could begin his flight training. Darbois, and other Frenchmen, discovered that they would be constantly called out and questioned on their loyalty to Hitler by their German commanders. He knew that if he defected, then the Germans would take reprisals out on his family — either shipping them off to concentration camps or executing them. If he did manage to escape, he would have to make it appear that he went missing in action during a regular mission.

His flight training went quite well and he was able to pilot a wide variety of training aircraft. He was eventually assigned to a fighter training squadron in Pomerania where he was able to qualify on the Messerschmitt Bf 109 and Focke-Wulf Fw 190. Some of these flights took him over Peenemuende on the Baltic coast and this was the German test center where many secret aircraft were tested. It is claimed that Darbois took clandestine photos of V-1s, V-2s, and Me 262s but this might be a bit far-fetched. He did know that if was assigned to the east and then defected to the Soviets, his chance for survival would be very limited for the Soviets seemed to have a policy of shooting defectors. If he was deployed to France or Italy, he stood a good chance of getting to American or British lines or even to neutral Sweden.

When his assignment orders came through, he found he would be with *JG 53* in northern Italy. He headed out via train to arrive on 30 June 1944 and to learn that *JG 53* had just been assigned to fly to Germany

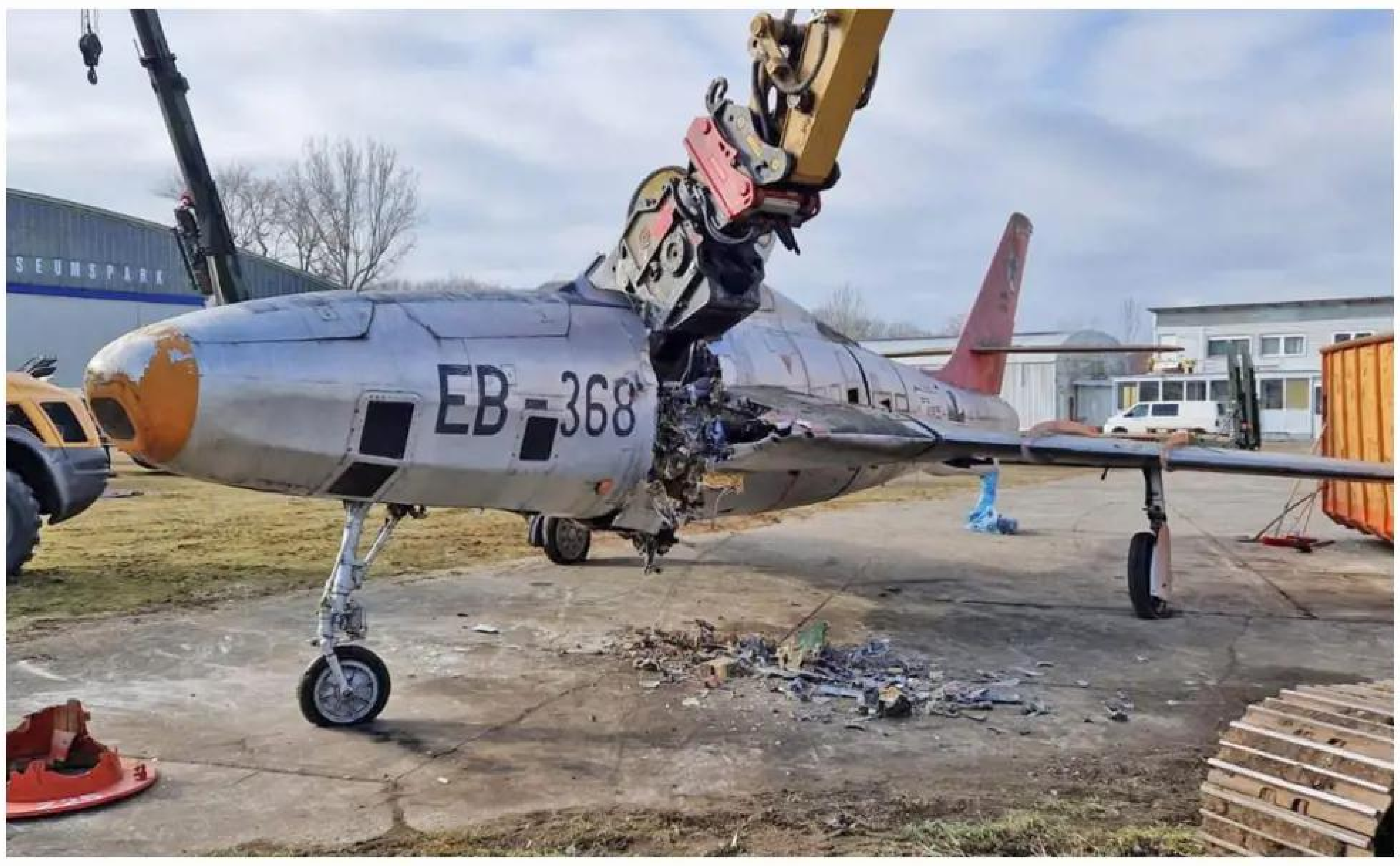
(continued on page 62)

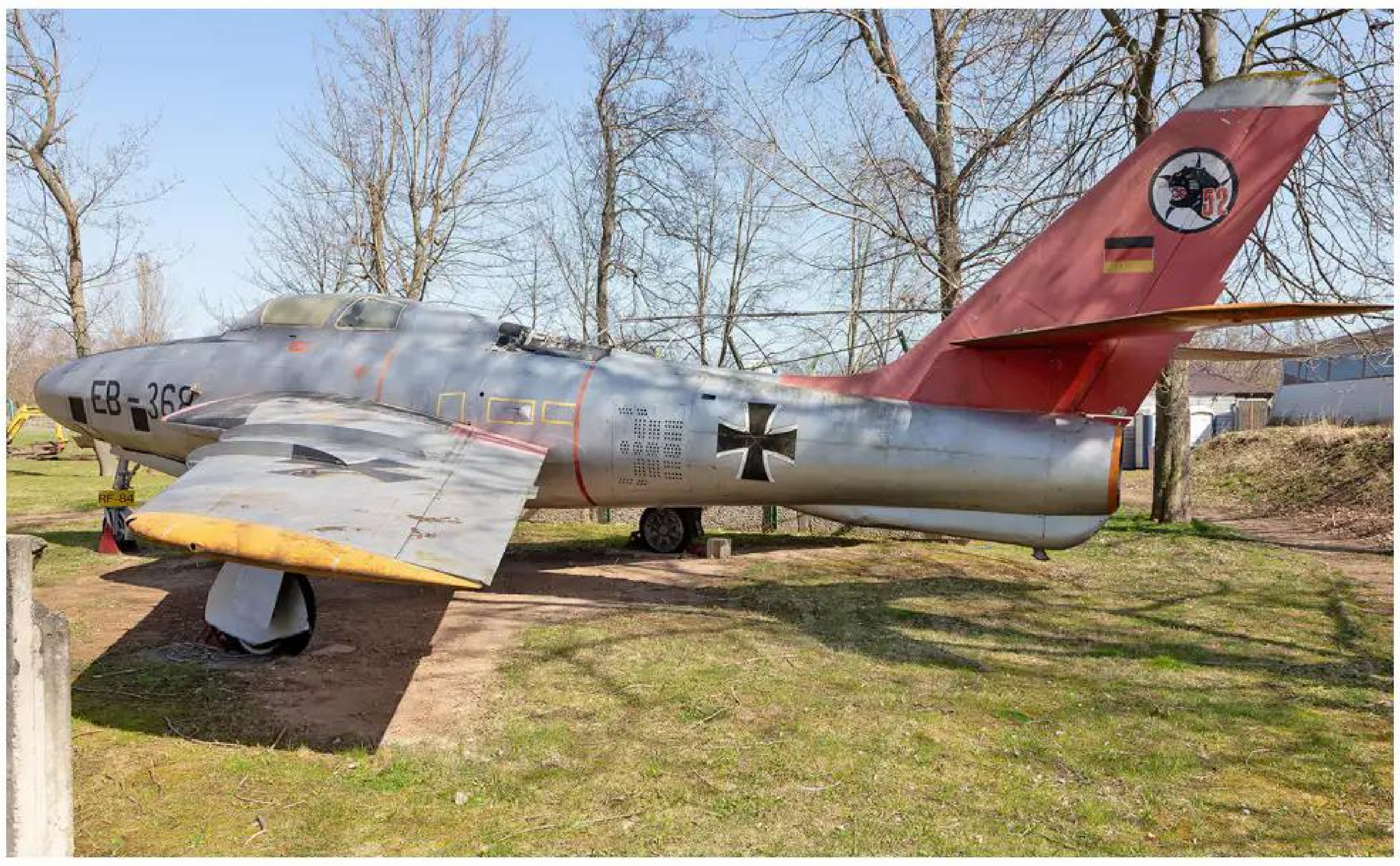
"The Fighting 72nd"
LIAISON SQUADRON
ARMY AIR FORCES
MULTUM IN PARVO
8
Officers and men of "The Fighting 72nd" Liaison Squadron with the unit insignia.

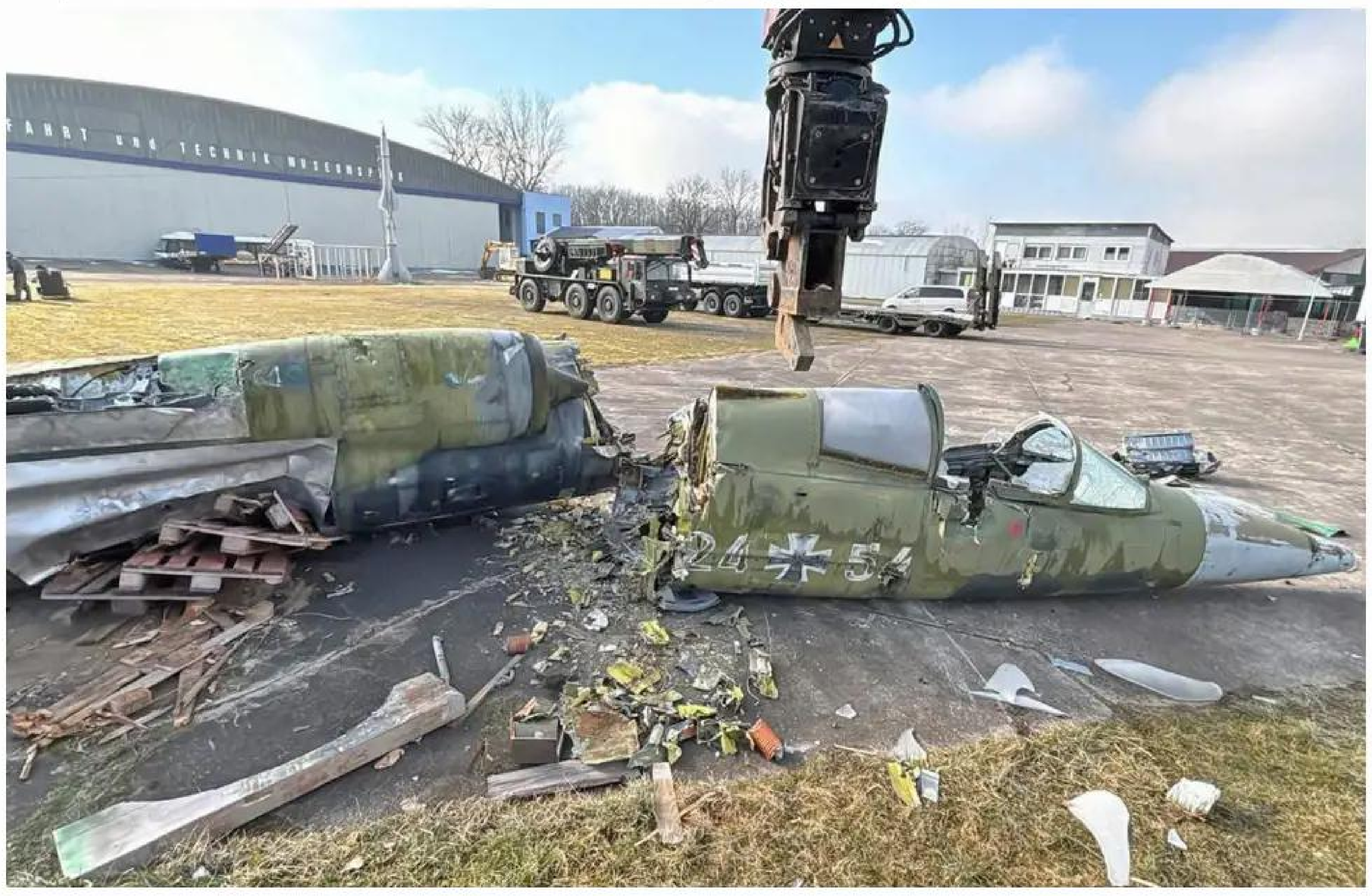

Spanish-built CASA 2.111 on display in *Luftwaffe* markings with swastika. The swastika is banned as a display within Germany and we have to wonder how these museum aircraft can display the symbol.

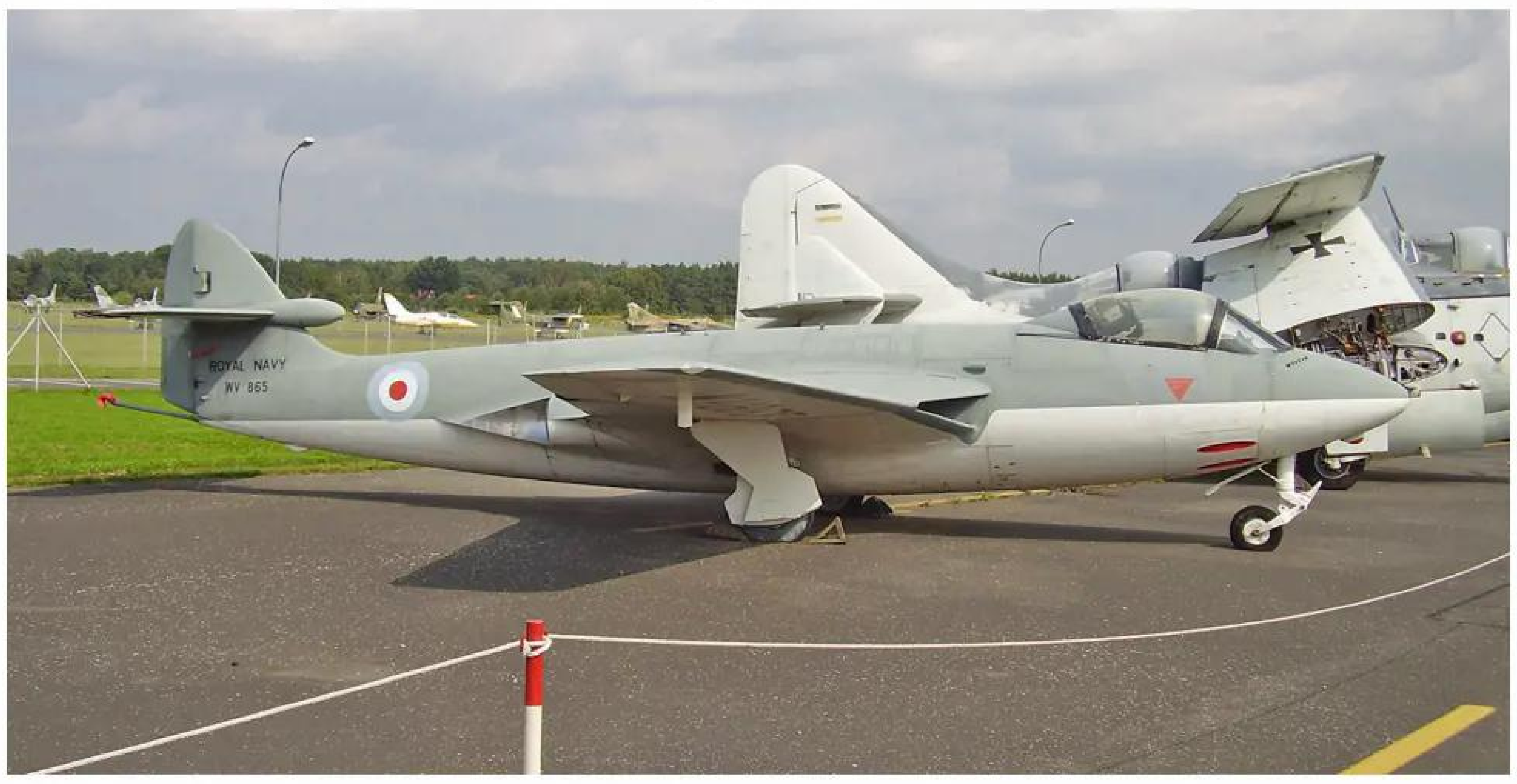
HOW CAN THIS STILL HAPPEN?

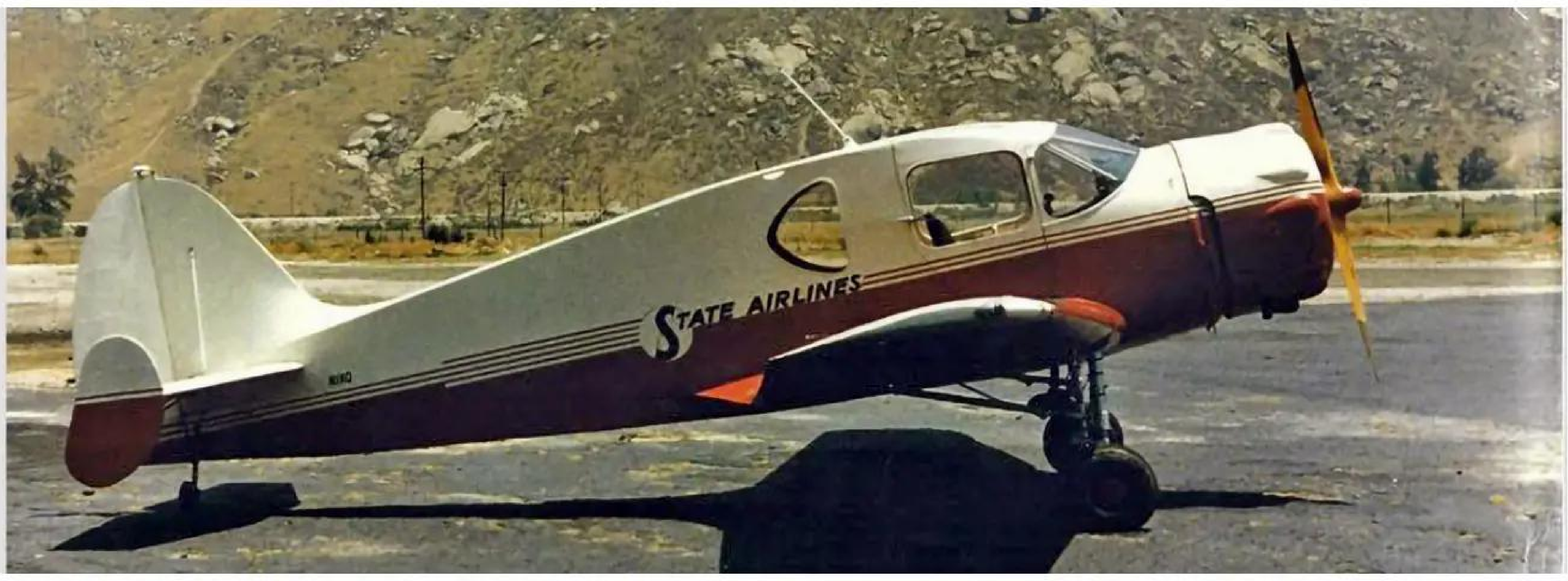
The Bundeswehr Museum of Military History at the Berlin-Gatow Airfield has disgracefully destroyed historic aircraft in what has been called a "training exercise" Claw machines were brought in to destroy, in short order, a very rare Republic RF-84 Thunderflash, F-10G Starfighter, Alouette II helicopter, and apparently several other aircraft. This museum is located on the former *Luftwaffe*/RAF airfield and holds over 200,000 artifacts including 155 aircraft (whether this number is before or after the "training exercise" is not known). Many of the aircraft are on outside display with no protection from the weather and all look in decidedly run-down condition. Does this mean that they will be future candidates for "training exercises"? A number of the aircraft on inside display are replicas and some are poorly done. Does it make more sense to save these and then scrap original airframes? Also, we found it interesting that WWII German aircraft were displayed with swastikas, which is a real no-no for Warbirds flying in Germany. The museum has duplicate examples of some of the scrapped aircraft but were these planes offered to other institutions before they were shredded? At *Air Classics*, it is our policy to urge readers not to support aviation museums that scrap their assets. It just makes no sense and is much like the Yankee Air Museum at Willow Run Airport scrapping their Armstrong Whitworth Argosy and Douglas DC-6 — two aircraft that had firm ties to the airfield. The reason for that scrapping was that the minimal funds obtained for the destruction of the airframes allowed for "salaries to be paid."


Is this what an aviation museum is supposed to do? Very Rare Republic RF-84F Thunderflash being ripped apart.

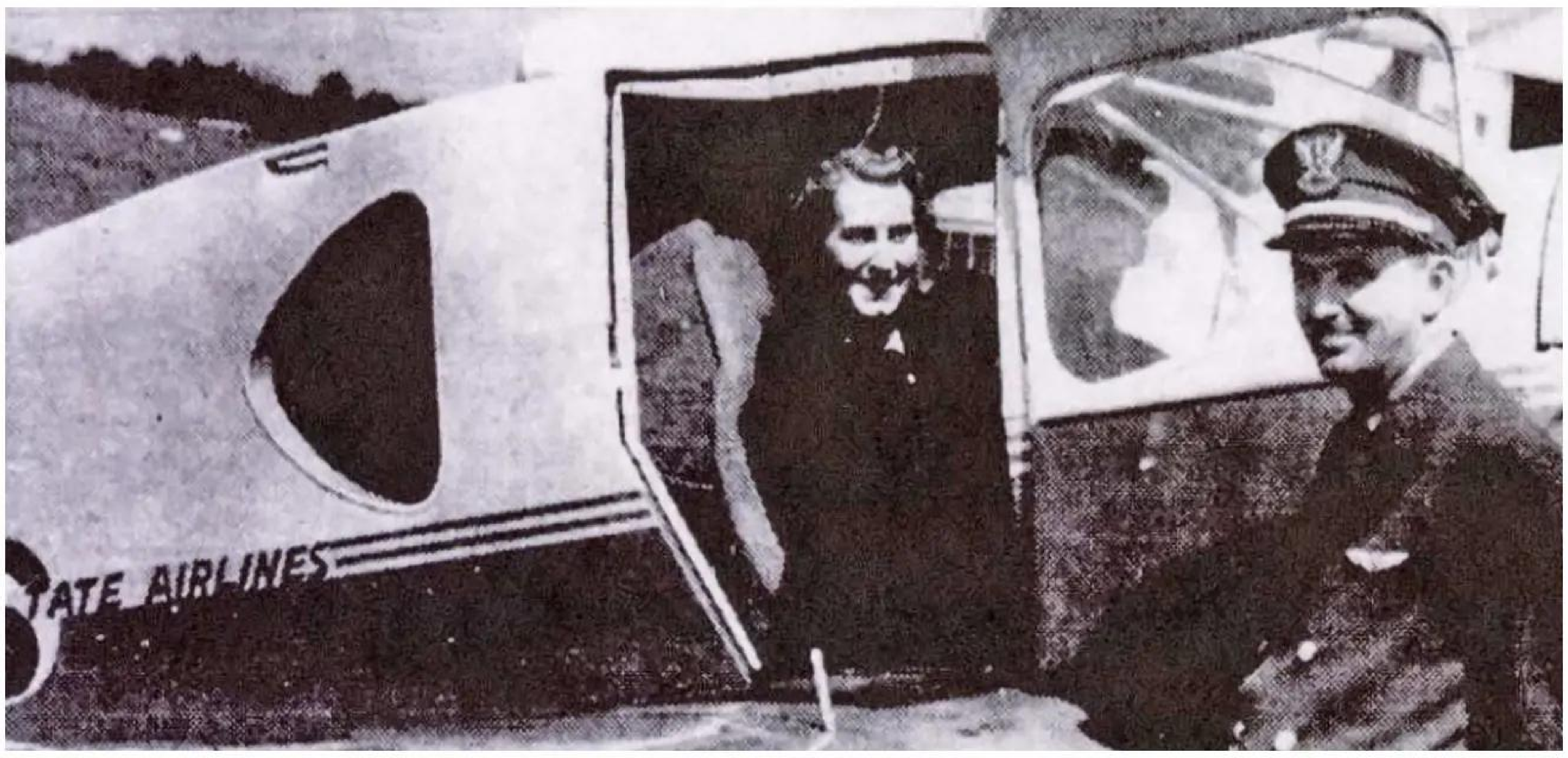

The RF-84F on display before the decision was made to destroy the aircraft as part of a "training exercise."


Lockheed F-104G being reduced to scrap.


All the aircraft on outside display are showing extensive weathering with little in the way of protecting the airframe from intrusion by rain or corrosive elements. Hawker Sea Hawk Mk. 4 WV865 and Fairey Gannett AS.4 UA+106 are now quite rare and hopefully will not be subjected to training exercises.


STATE AIRLINES

State Airlines was only in operation for a couple of years and the fleet consisted of three Bellanca 14-9Ls capable of carrying three passengers.

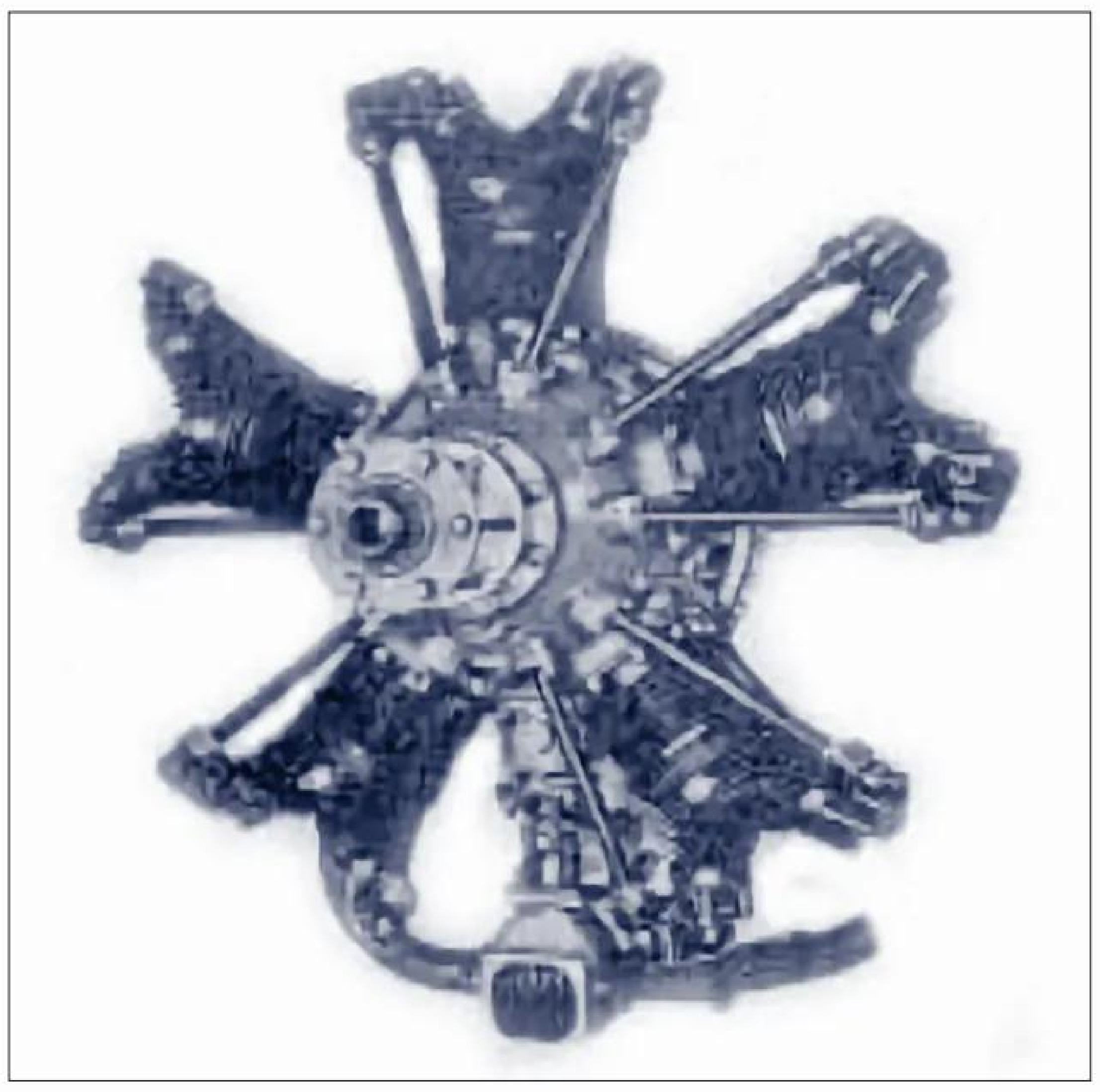

STATE AIRLINES

The local newspaper came out to take a photo of the first passenger to fly in the Bellanca along with the captain.

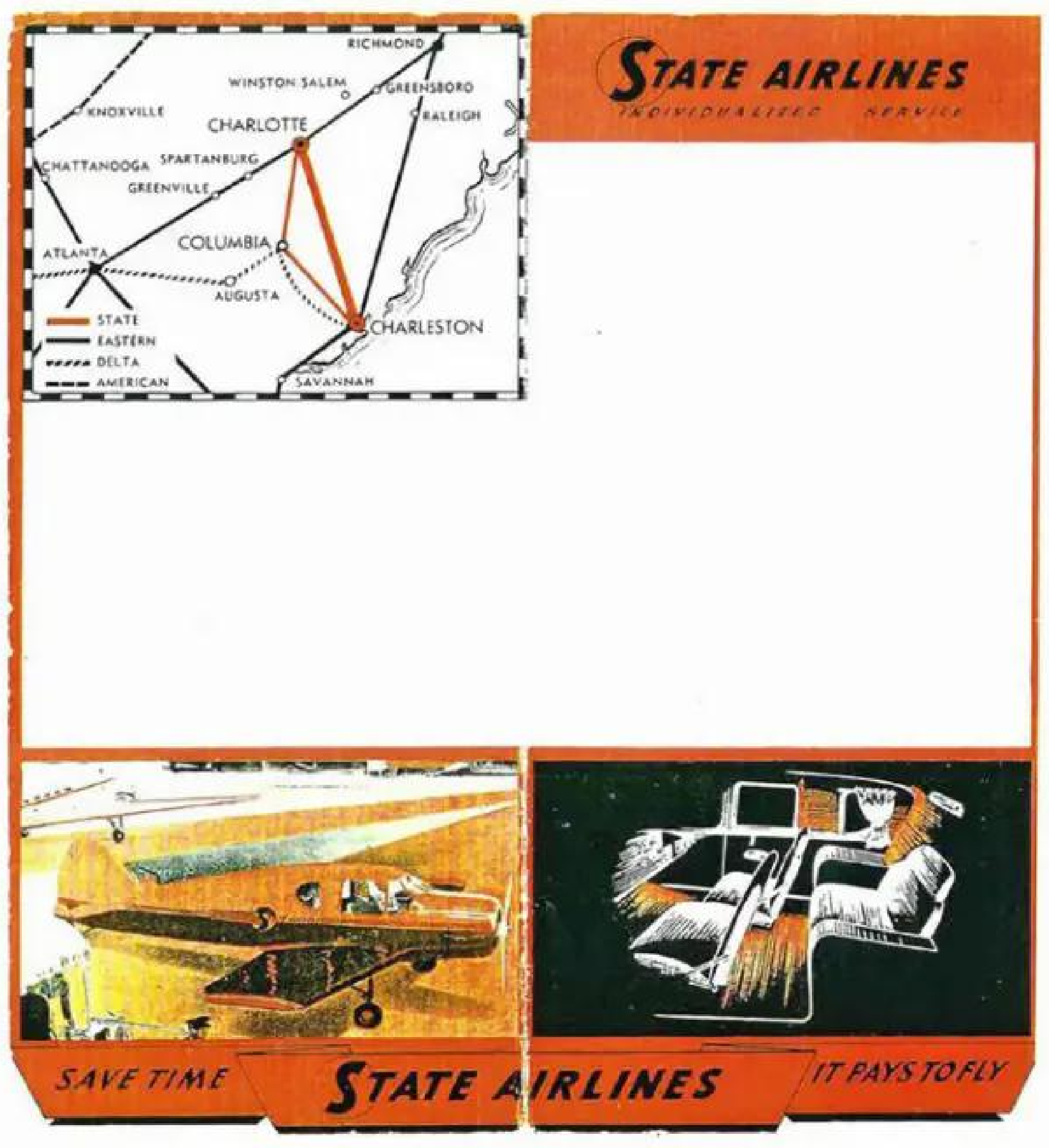
STATE AIRLINES
CREASON
AUTOMOTIVE & WRECKER SERVICE
CHARLOTTE, NC

Moving the Bellanca to the museum.

Raising the aircraft in the historic 1936 hangar.



Quite often, not enough attention is given to early aircraft engines. The Lenape LM-5 Brave radial was capable of 95-hp at 2200-rpm.

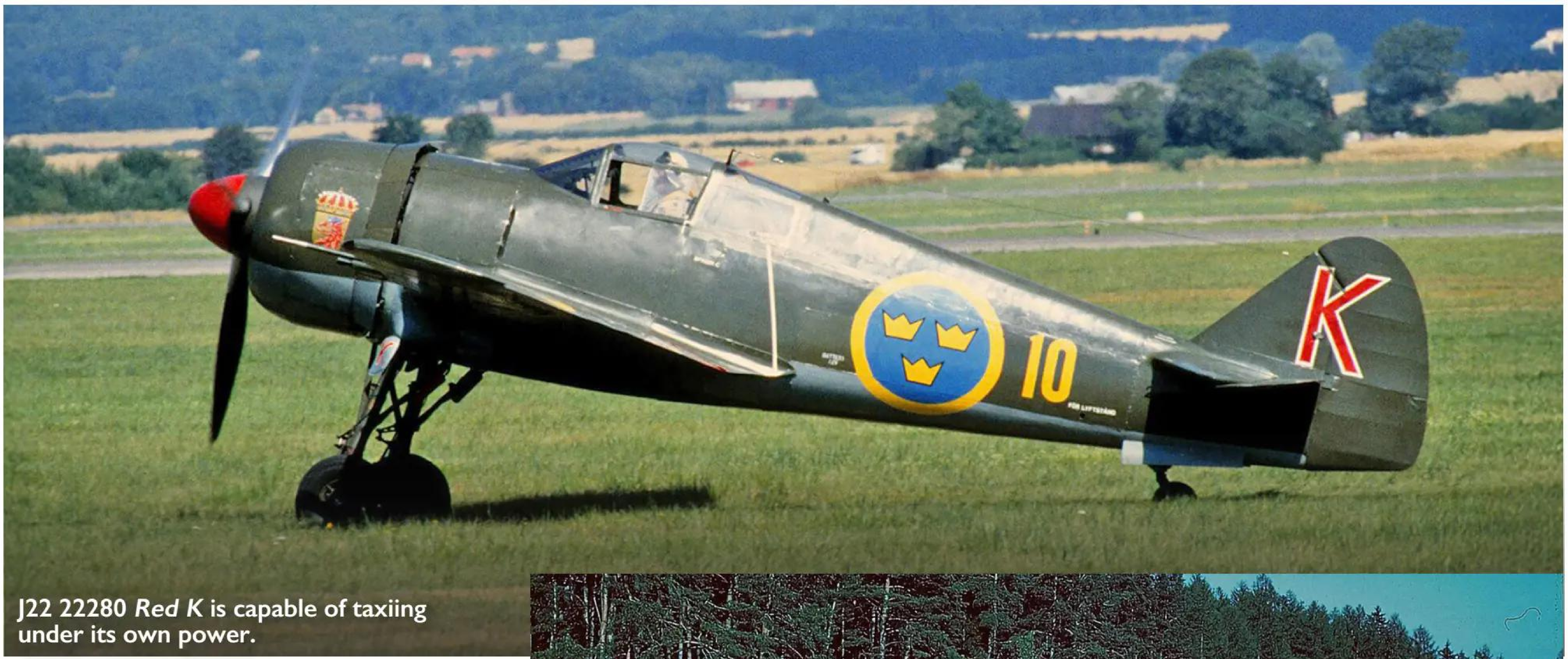

STATE AIRLINES
INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE
RICHMOND
WINSTON SALEM
GREENSBORO
RALEIGH
KNOXVILLE
CHARLOTTE
CHATTANOOGA
SPARTANBURG
GREENVILLE
COLUMBIA
ATLANTA
AUGUSTA
CHARLESTON
SAVANNAH
STATE
EASTERN
DELTA
AMERICAN
SAVE TIME
STATE AIRLINES
IT PAYS TO FLY

Original brochure for State Airlines.

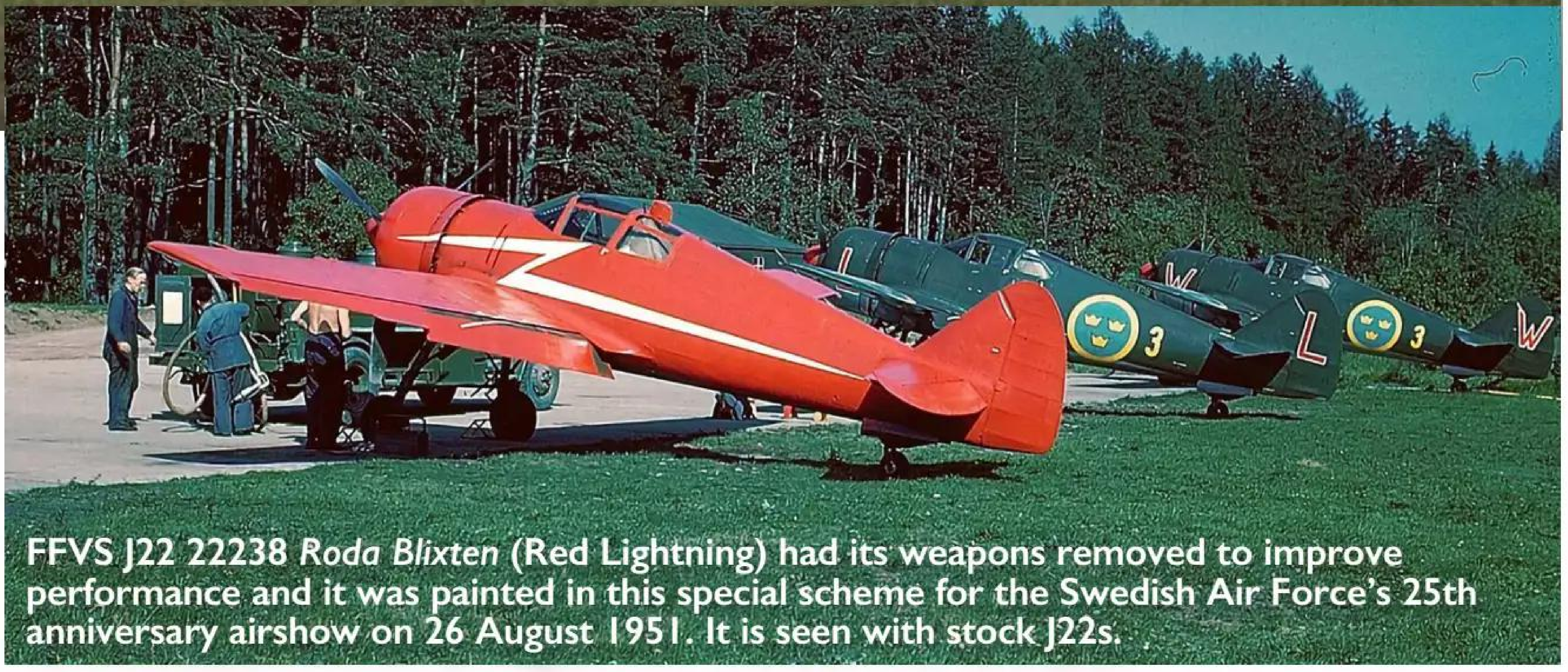
PRESERVED BELLANCA

Sadly, surviving early aircraft from pioneering aircraft designer Giussepi Bellanca are few and far between. Fortunately, one of the survivors is now available for all to see. Bellanca 14-9L Cruisair N1KQ was operated by State Airlines that began serving Charlotte Municipal Airport in North Carolina during 1940. It was the State's only on-demand air service and it flew between Charlotte and Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina. The little Bellanca may seem an odd choice for such an endeavor but it was economical, could carry three, and was faster than an auto or the train. State Airlines ordered three 14-9Ls in 1939 but because of slow engine deliveries (which should not have come as a surprise due to the oddness of the powerplant), the company accepted just two of the planes. The engine was the Lenape LM-5 Brave, a five-cylinder radial capable of 95-hp. With the start of WWII, State Airlines did not last long and the planes were sold in 1943. The aircraft was interesting in the fact that it had control sticks instead of wheels. It also had a full night/IFR instrument panel and two 20-gallon fuel tanks mounted in the wings. The retractable landing gear was manually raised and lowered, taking 31 cranks by the pilot. Somehow, N1KQ managed to survive through the years. It had two owners until being acquired by Karl Ascherfeld in 1962. He flew it for several years but then decided the plane needed a restoration. Trying to have someone else do the project failed so Karl did it himself and the plane was completed in 1984. It was eventually hung in Charlotte's Concourse D in 2007. In 2025, the Bellanca was taken down and reassembled by volunteers from American Airlines. The plane was then hung in the historic 1936 hangar, which is the oldest surviving structure on the airport. The delicate task of hanging the Bellanca was undertaken by IWEISS, an expert rigging and automation company based in Fairview, New Jersey.

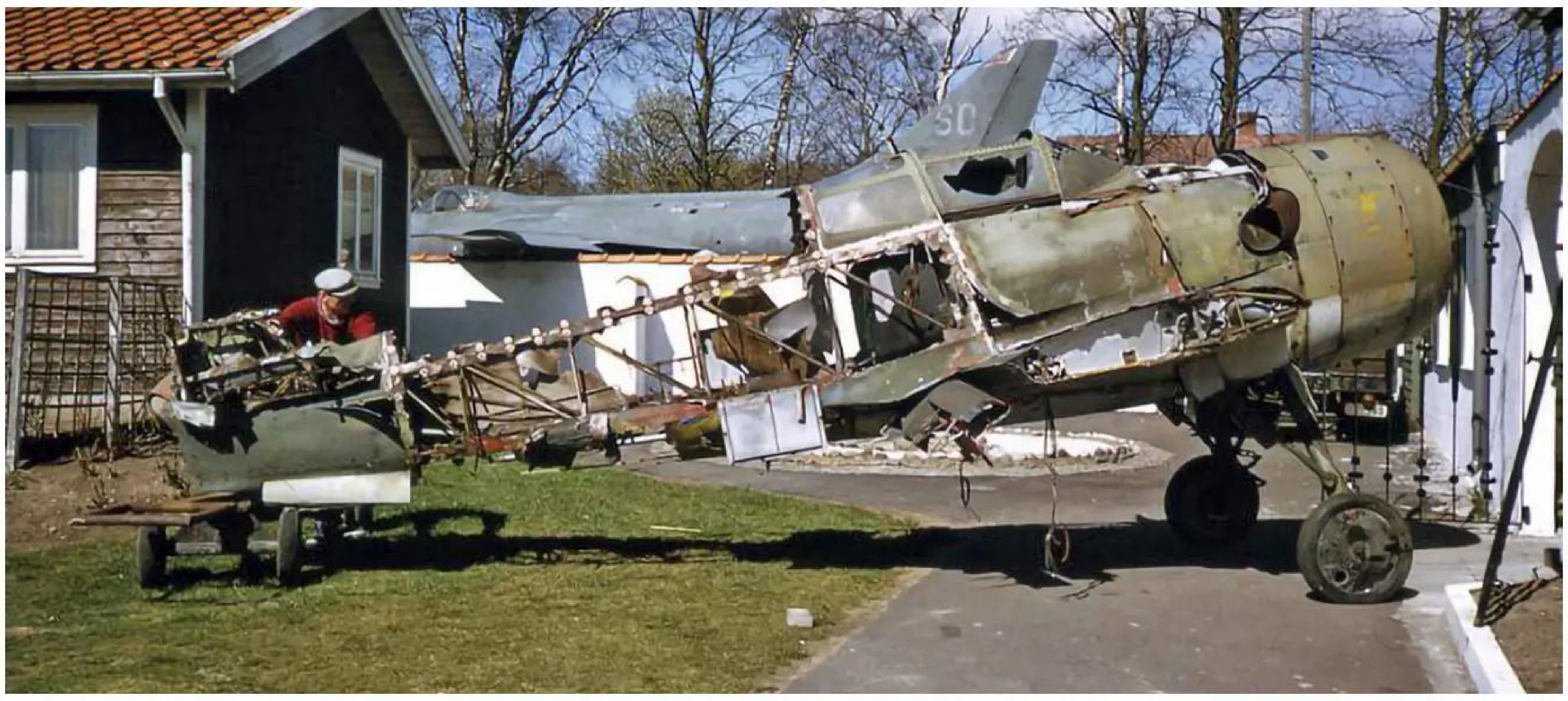
The plane makes an excellent addition to the Sullenberger Aviation Museum.



J22 22280 *Red K* is capable of taxiing under its own power.



FFVS J22 22238 *Roda Blixten* (Red Lightning) had its weapons removed to improve performance and it was painted in this special scheme for the Swedish Air Force's 25th anniversary airshow on 26 August 1951. It is seen with stock J22s.



This is how the restoration J22 22149 started.

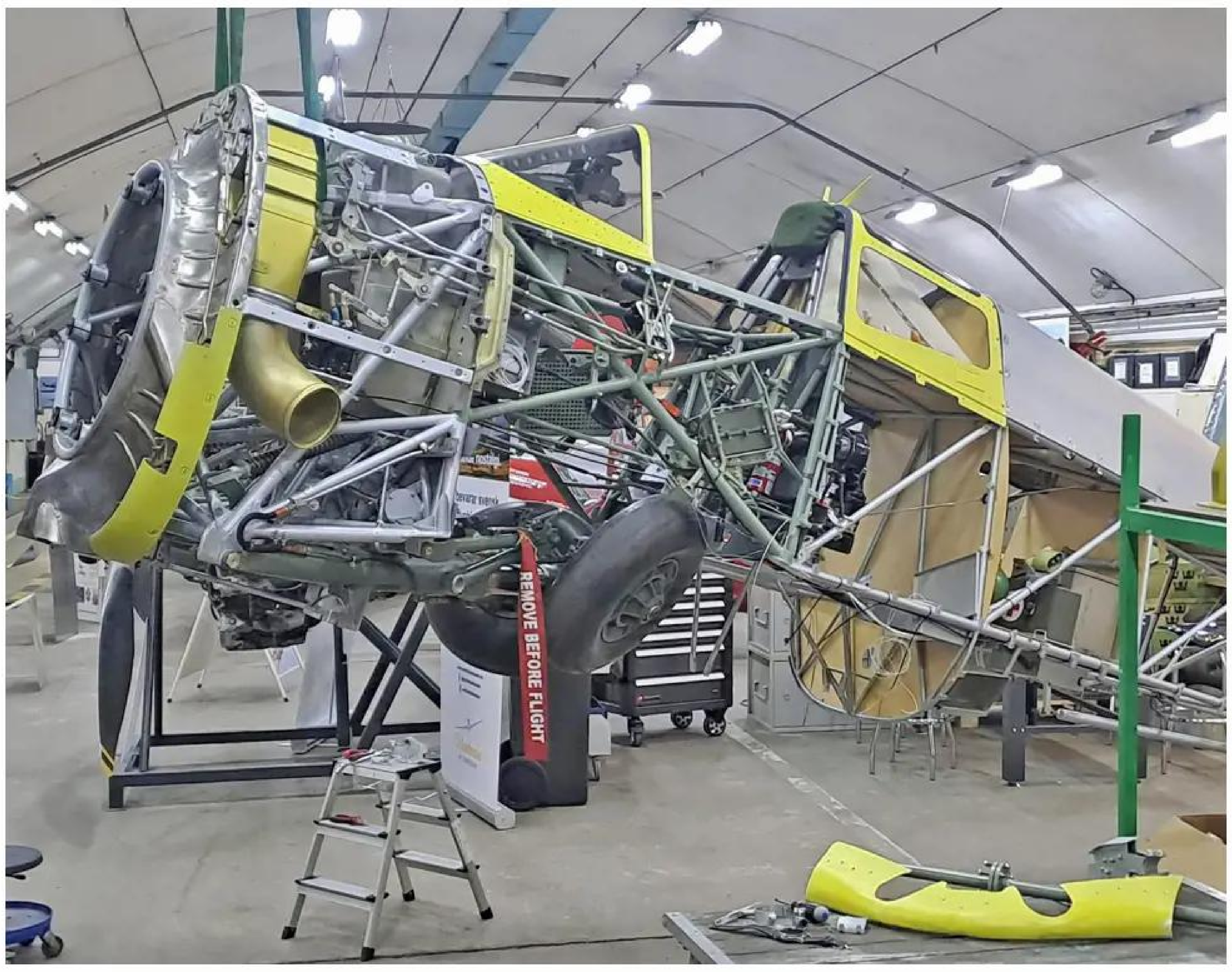
HOMEGROWN FIGHTER

The Svedinos Auto and Air Museum has joined forces with Warbirds of Sweden to return a rare FFVS J22 to the air. This aircraft is not familiar to most American readers so a little history first. When the United States placed an embargo on Sweden receiving 120 Seversky P-35 (J9 in Swedish service) and 144 Vultee P-66 (J10) fighter aircraft, the country's *Flygvapnet* was suddenly desperate for new planes. A number of other proposals were made including the purchase of Polikarpov I-16s but these machines were considered obsolete. The VL Myrsky from Finland was rejected because of its all-wood construction. The strangest offer came from Japan who offered the Mitsubishi A6M Zero but the Swedes knew that delivery would be problematical. As an interim solution, Italy supplied the Fiat CR.42 (J11) and Reggiane Re.2000 (J20).

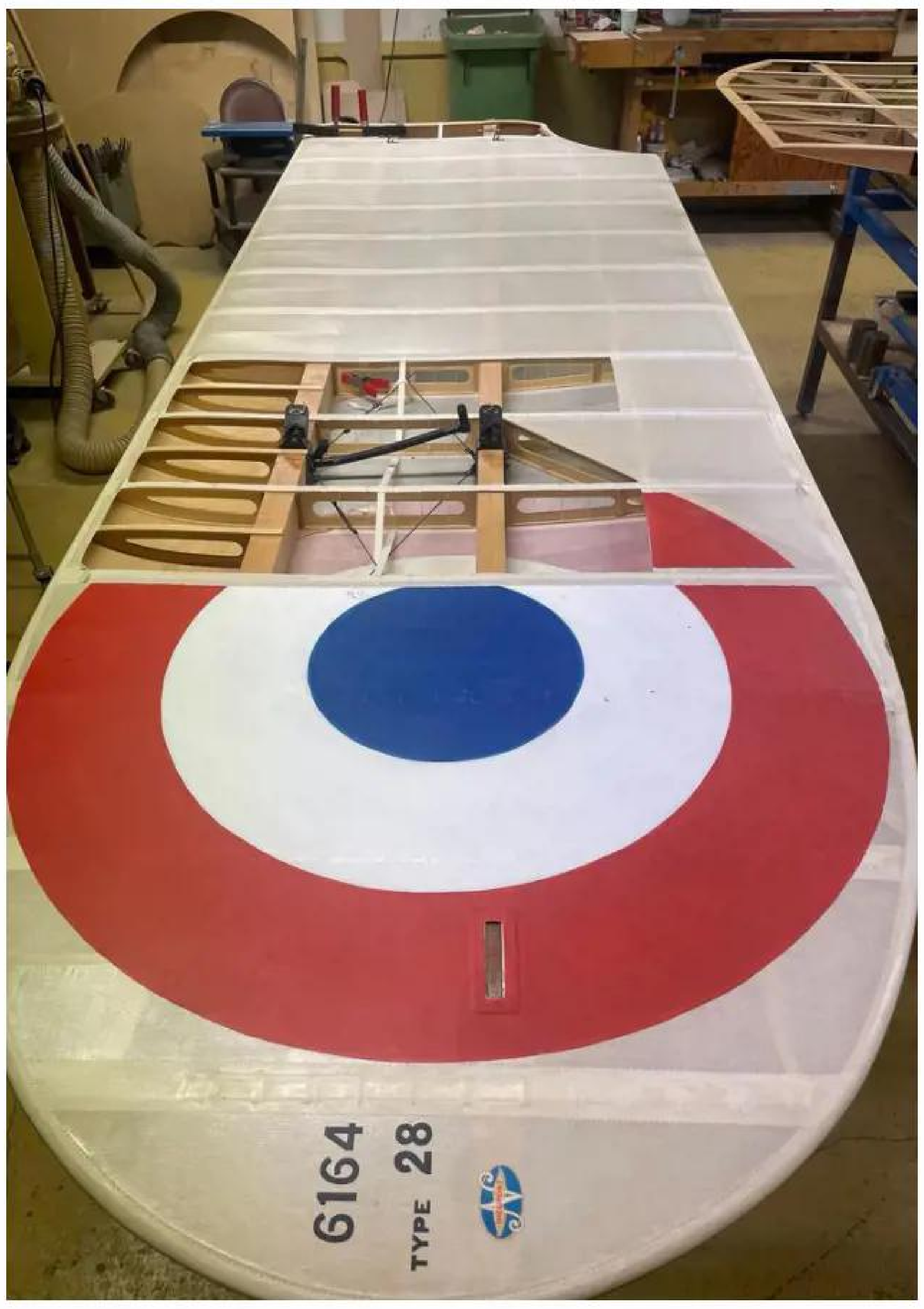
Saab was fully occupied constructing the Saab 17 twin-engine fighter and Saab 18 bomber. A new organization was set up and it was a mouthful — *Kungliga Flygforvaltningens Flygverkstad I Stockholm.* This roughly translated to Royal Air Administration Aircraft Factory in Stockholm. Bo Lundberg led the design team for the new plane, which received the designation J22. The aircraft was powered by an illegal copy of the Pratt & Whitney R-1830 and this was built by *Svenska Flygmotor*. The aircraft did not break any new aeronautical ground and it had a welded steel tube fuselage covered with molded plywood panels. The wings had welded steel spars and ribs then covered with plywood while the narrow-track landing gear retracted rearward and entirely into the fuselage.

The prototype flew on 20 September 1942 with the second not taking to the air until 11 June 1943. Both were destroyed in crashes. Some 198 production J22s were ordered and expected to be completed by July 1945 but strikes delayed the final aircraft until April 1946. Completely obsolete by the time it entered service, Swedish pilots claimed the plane could "hold its own" compared to the P-51D Mustangs the Americans were now supplying to Sweden. The final J22 was retired in 1952.

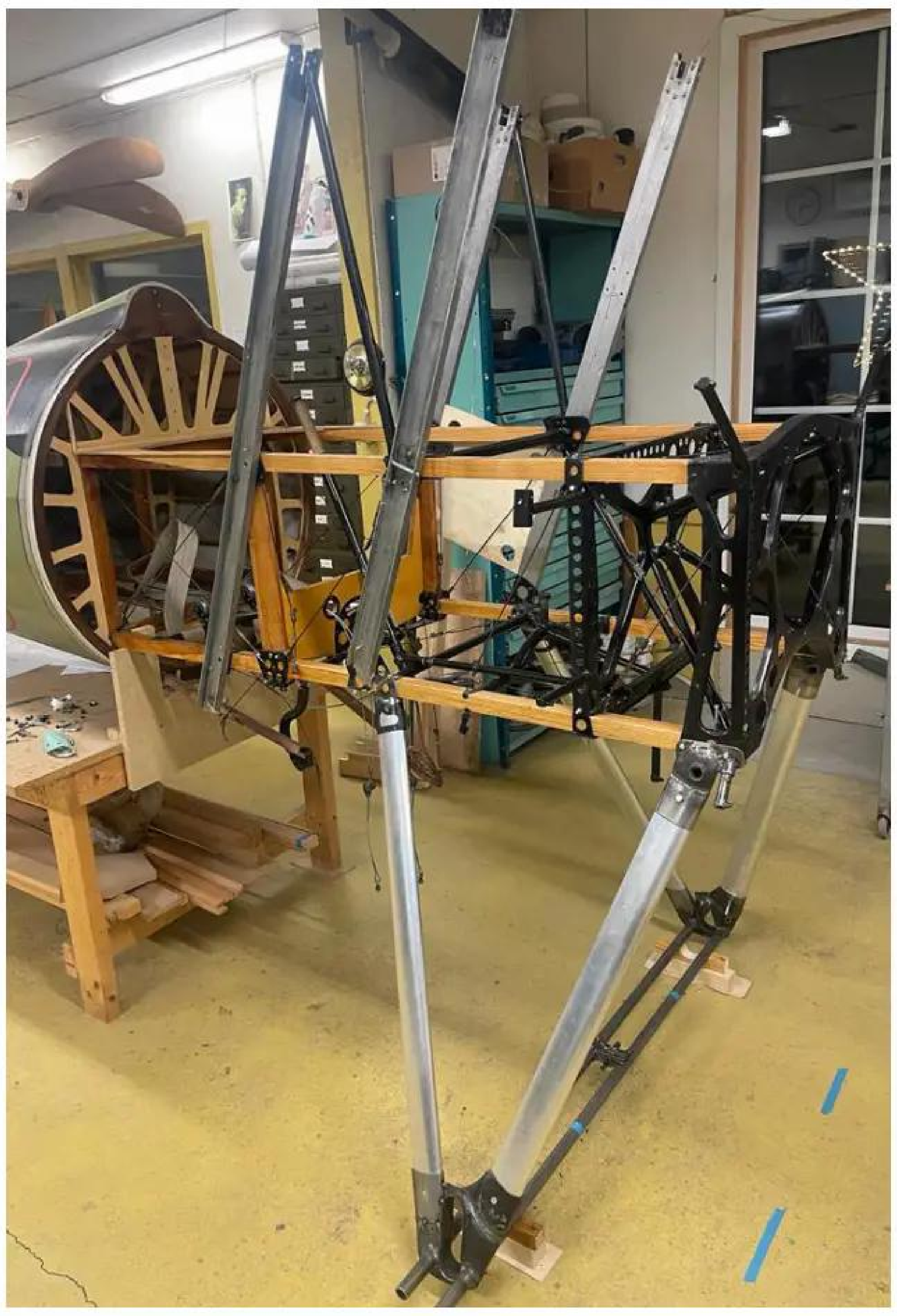
Five examples survive and one, *Red K*, can taxi under its own power. J22 22149 is currently under restoration to fly and considerable progress has been made on the aircraft. Since the plane is relatively simple and the engine readily available, few problems are expected in completing the little fighter and it will make a significant addition to Sweden's small but growing Warbird population.



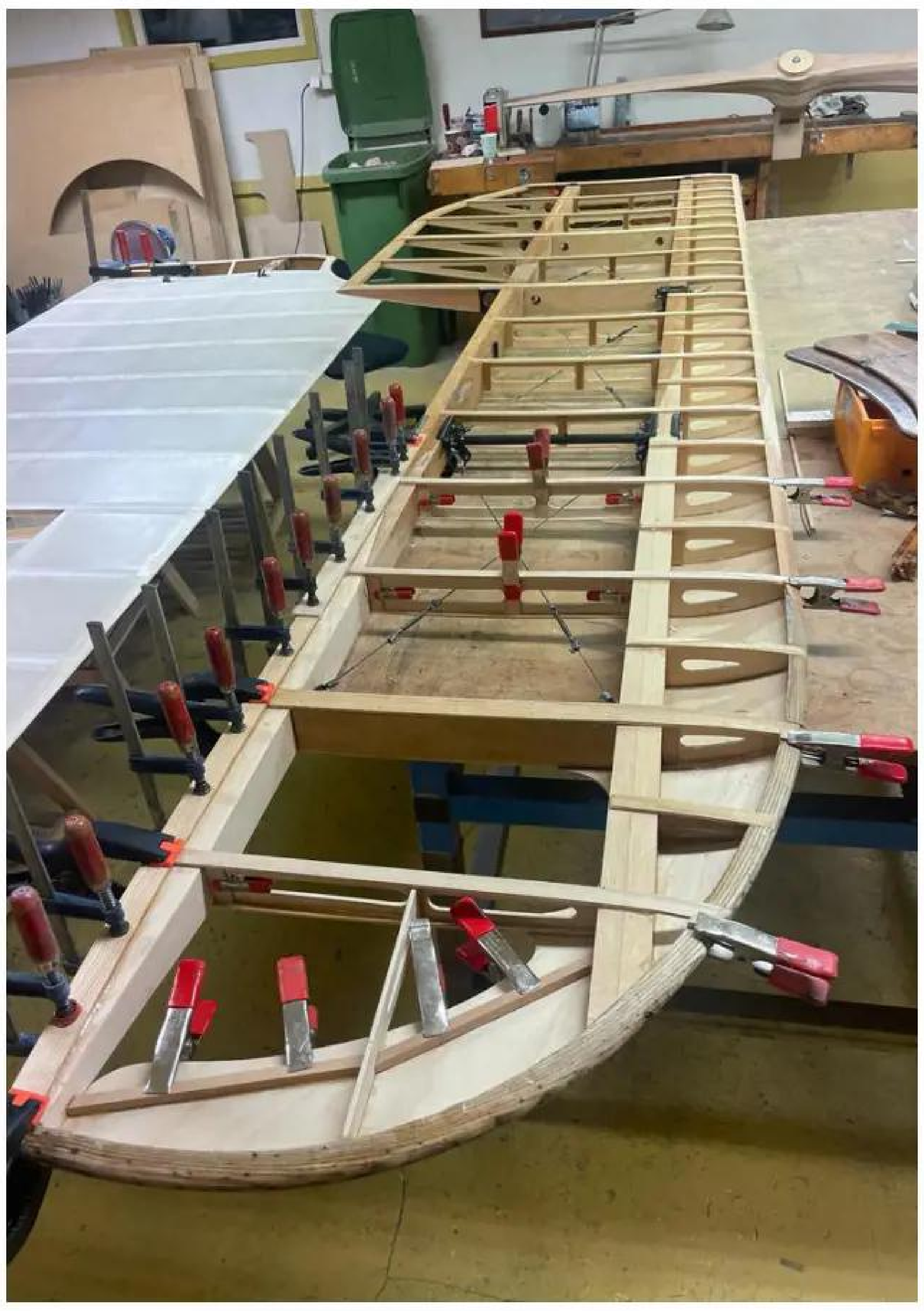
Restoration underway. Note how the gear folds backwards into the fuselage.



Wing under repair at Carlson's Swedish workshop.



Repaired landing gear back in place.



Where damaged, the original wood was carefully repaired and reglued.

NIEUPORT REPAIRS NEARLY COMPLETE

During September 2023, pilot/restorer Mikael Carlson pulled off a skilled emergency landing in the American Heritage Museum's ultra-rare original Nieuport 28 following engine problems. The aircraft was moved back to Mikael's workshop in Sweden and repairs are now nearly complete. The landing gear that took most of the impact force had been newly fabricated during the original restoration and it has been repaired and re-installed. A new propeller has been built while the rotary engine has been overhauled. Damaged woodwork has been repaired and reglued while the original specification Irish linen used during the Great War will cover the areas where the fabric had been removed. We should see the first flight of this aircraft in the very near future.

AERO-ACCESSORIES, INC.
In Business | Since 1956

SPECIALIZING IN:
- Radial Engine Accessories
- Overhauls and Repairs
- Accessories and Carburetors
- DC3/C47 Hydraulic Components

FAA Repair Station
No. UB2R207L

Call us for your warbird and vintage aircraft accessory needs!

210-735-9467 | Fax 210-735-2819
www.aeroaccessoriesinc.com | sales@aeroaccessoriesinc.com
300 Fredericksburg Road, San Antonio, Texas 78201-6305

AMERICAN EXPRESS MasterCard VISA DISCOVER NETWORK Find us on Facebook

FLY IN THE P-51 MUSTANG!

WWII'S ULTIMATE FIGHTER

HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RIDES BEGIN AT JUST $99!

MUSTANG * SHOOTING STAR
KAYDET * TROJAN * SKYTRAIN

THESE RIDES MAKE FOR A PERFECT GIFT

CALIF AIR GUARD

Our immaculately maintained fleet of classic aircraft provide thrilling flight experiences for every budget.

Located in the heart of America's resort paradise, these rides provide a once-in-a-lifetime gift for a friend or loved one. We have over 75 rare aircraft displayed in a modern 91,000 square foot climate-controlled setting that is just minutes away from world-class vacation features.

CALL 760-778-6262 FOR FULL DETAILS

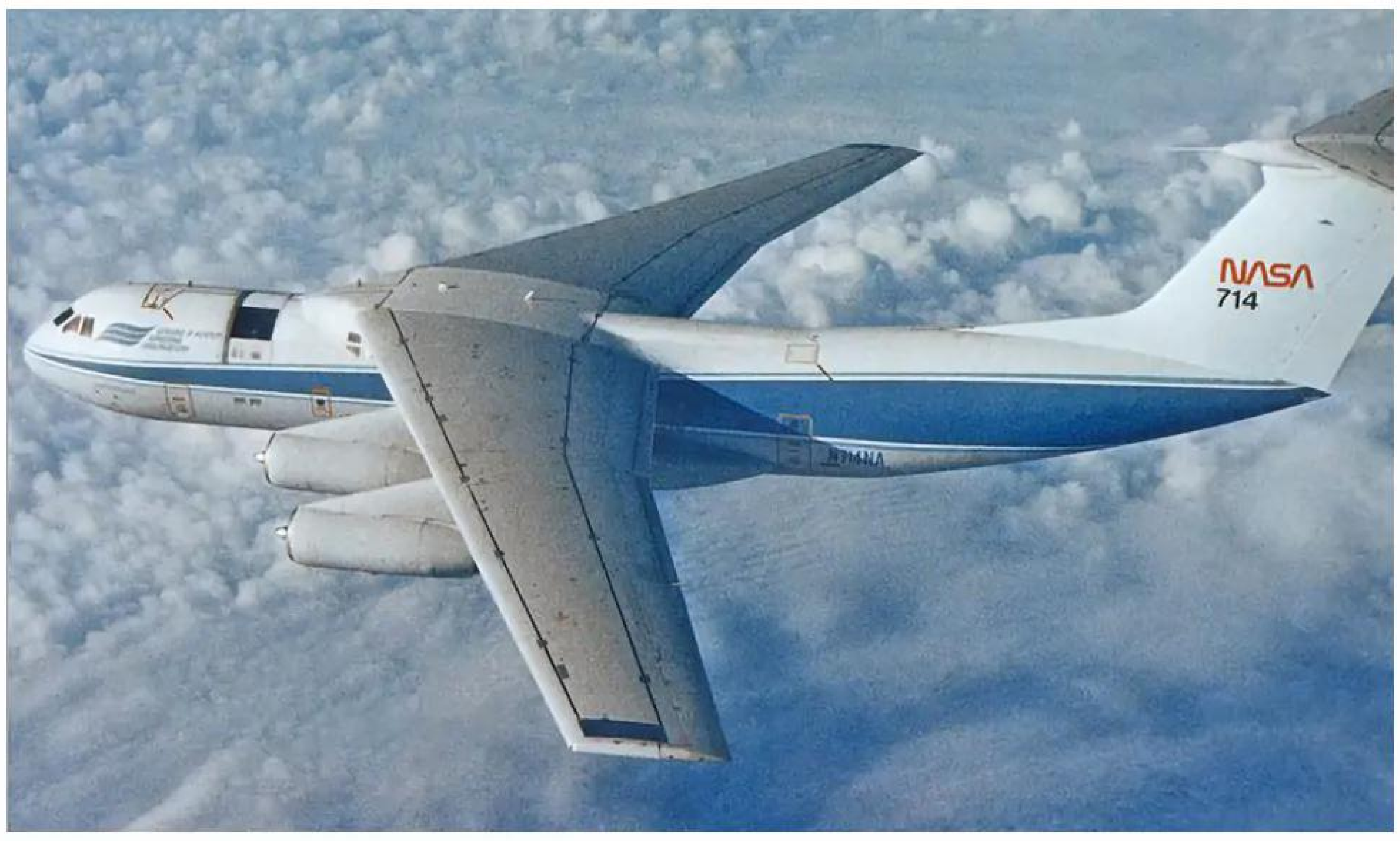
Also go to *www.palmspringsairmuseum.org*

PALM SPRINGS
AIR MUSEUM
EST 1996

PALM SPRINGS AIR MUSEUM

745 North Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs, California 92262
Open daily 10 to 5 • Closed Thanksgiving & Christmas

Photography by Jarrod Ulrich, Michael O'Leary, and PSAM



KAO in all its glory at high altitude with the observatory modifications ahead of the left wing clearly visible.

N-248
NASA
714

KAO staff with the StarLifter shortly before the aircraft's retirement.

END OF THE AIRBORNE OBSERVATORY

NASA's Gerard P. Kuiper Airborne Observatory, known as KAO N714NA, has been recycled on the very ramp in front of the hangar where the aircraft was originally converted for use by the space agency in 1974, **reports Nicholas A. Veronico**. The airborne infrared observatory met it final fate in front of Hangar 211 beginning on 17 March at NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California.

KAO was built as a Lockheed L-300-50A-01 variant of the C-141 StarLifter. The L-300 served as the civilian demonstrator for potential sales to civilian commercial freight haulers. When no buyers emerged, NASA acquired the aircraft and modified it into an airborne observatory with the addition of a one-meter Cassegrain reflecting telescope in a cavity on the port side, forward of the wing box. The telescope cavity was open to the atmosphere and could not be covered to enable the telescope to collect faint infrared light from the heavens, instruments on board the observatory could collect the infrared signatures of distant stars, galaxies, and other astronomical phenomenon at a range between one and 500 microns.

During its 20-year operational life, between 1975 and 1995, KAO made such discoveries as the rings of Uranus (which are vertical as opposed to the horizontal rings around Saturn), the first evidence of the massive black hole at the center of the Milky Way, water in Jupiter's atmosphere, and star nurseries hidden in dense dust clouds, to highlight just a few.

NASA parked KAO in 1995 in order to move its funding to the 2.7-meter infrared airborne telescope known as the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, or SOFIA. SOFIA was based on an ex-Pan Am and United Airlines Boeing 747SP, the limited production "short" fuselage variant of the 747. This observatory made its last science flight on 30 September 2022 and today is displayed at the Pima Air & Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona.

Pieces of the Kuiper flying observatory will live on as PlaneTags (*www.planetags.com*) when the company makes them available in the coming months. PlaneTags also saved skin from the KAO's predecessor, the Learjet Observatory N805NA, which flew with a 12-inch telescope and operated between 1974 and 2001.

U.S. COAST GUARD
6302

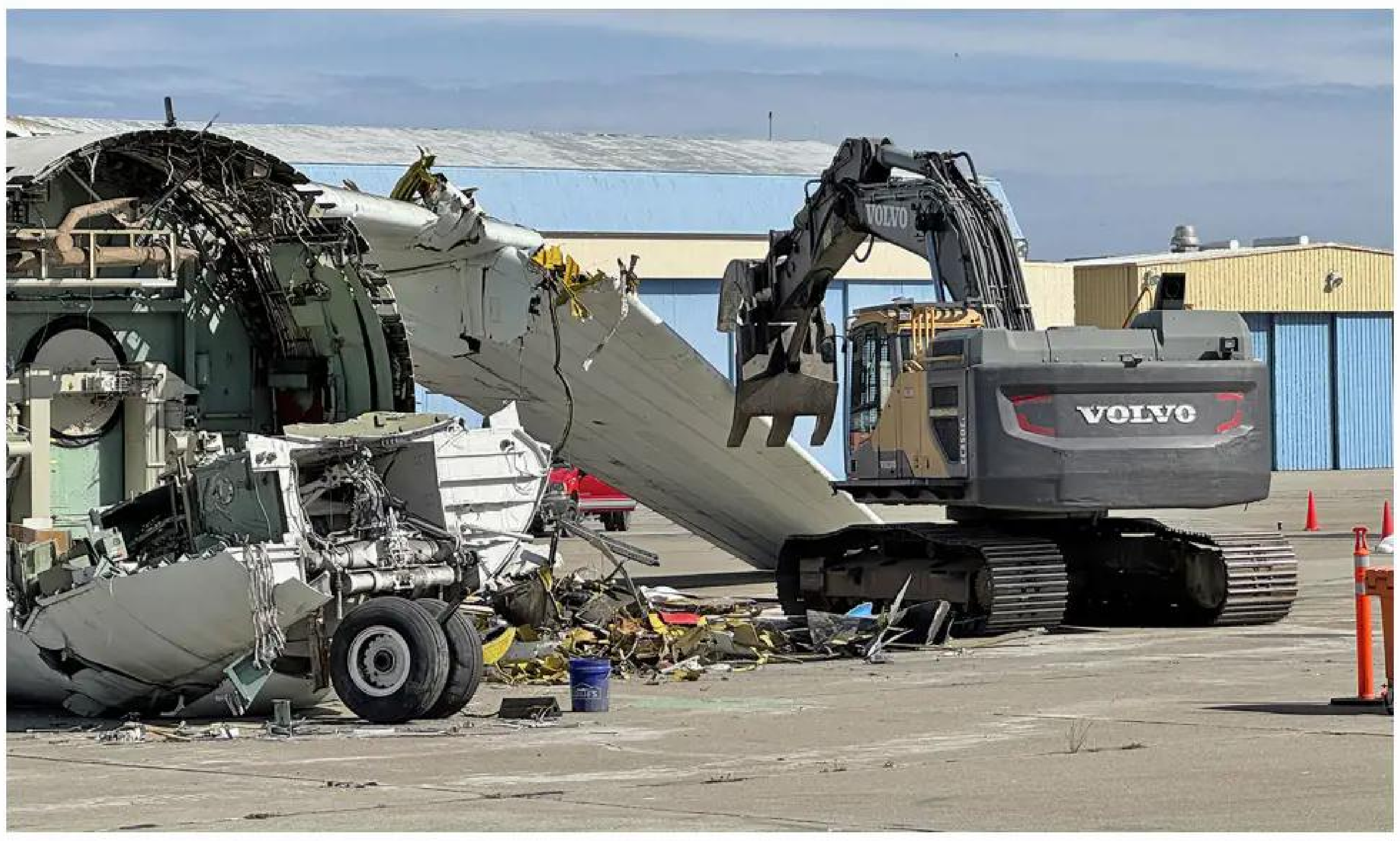
GossHawk
UNLIMITED

Vintage/Warbird Aircraft
Restoration & Maintenance
T-28, P-51, Fw 190, T-6, B-17, L-29, PB4Y-2, Me 262
Stinson V-77 and a wide variety of other aircraft

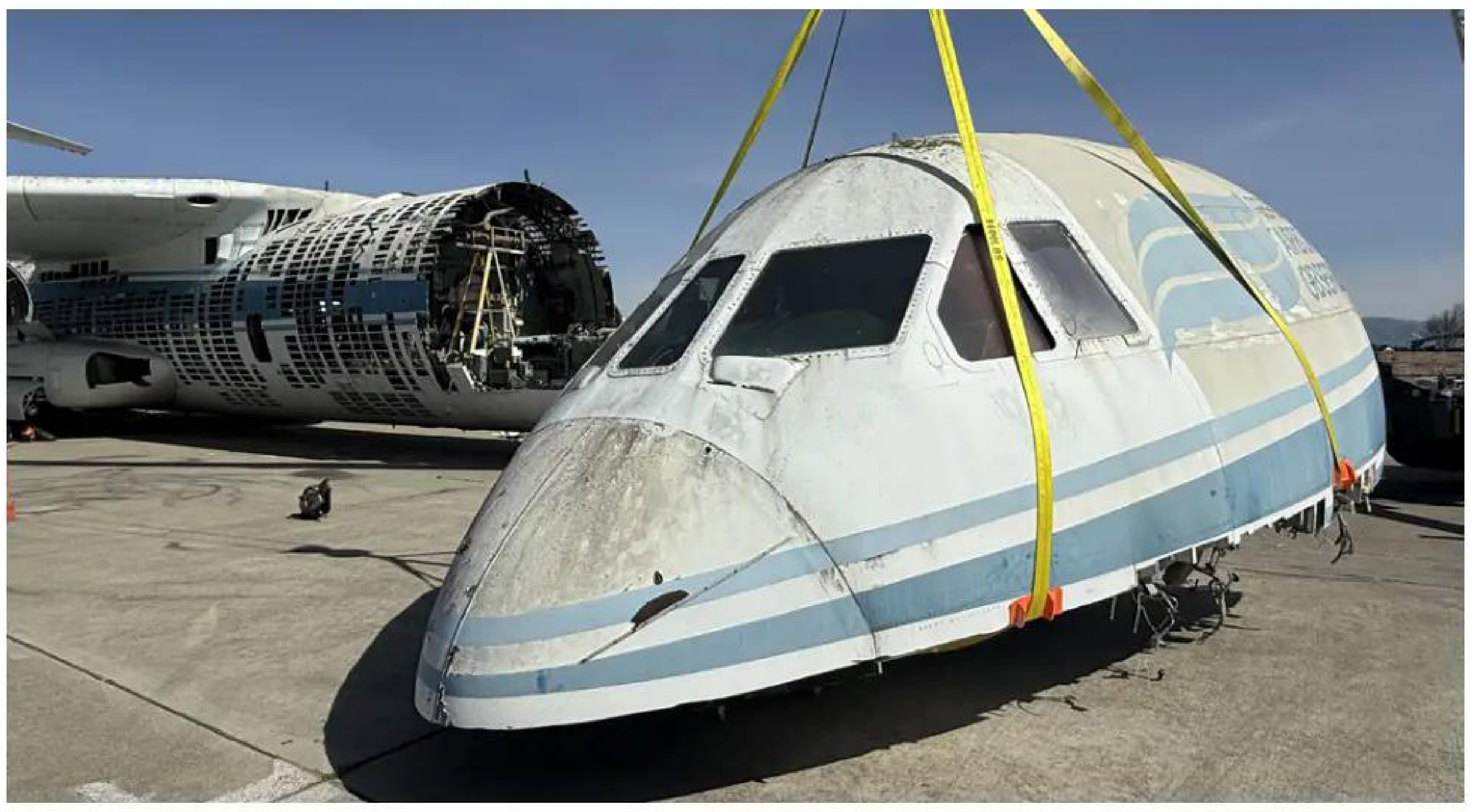
52 Years Aviation Mechanic Experience
20 Years with Champlin Fighter Museum

3184 N. Rockwell Ave.
Casa Grande, AZ 85122
(520) 423-2622

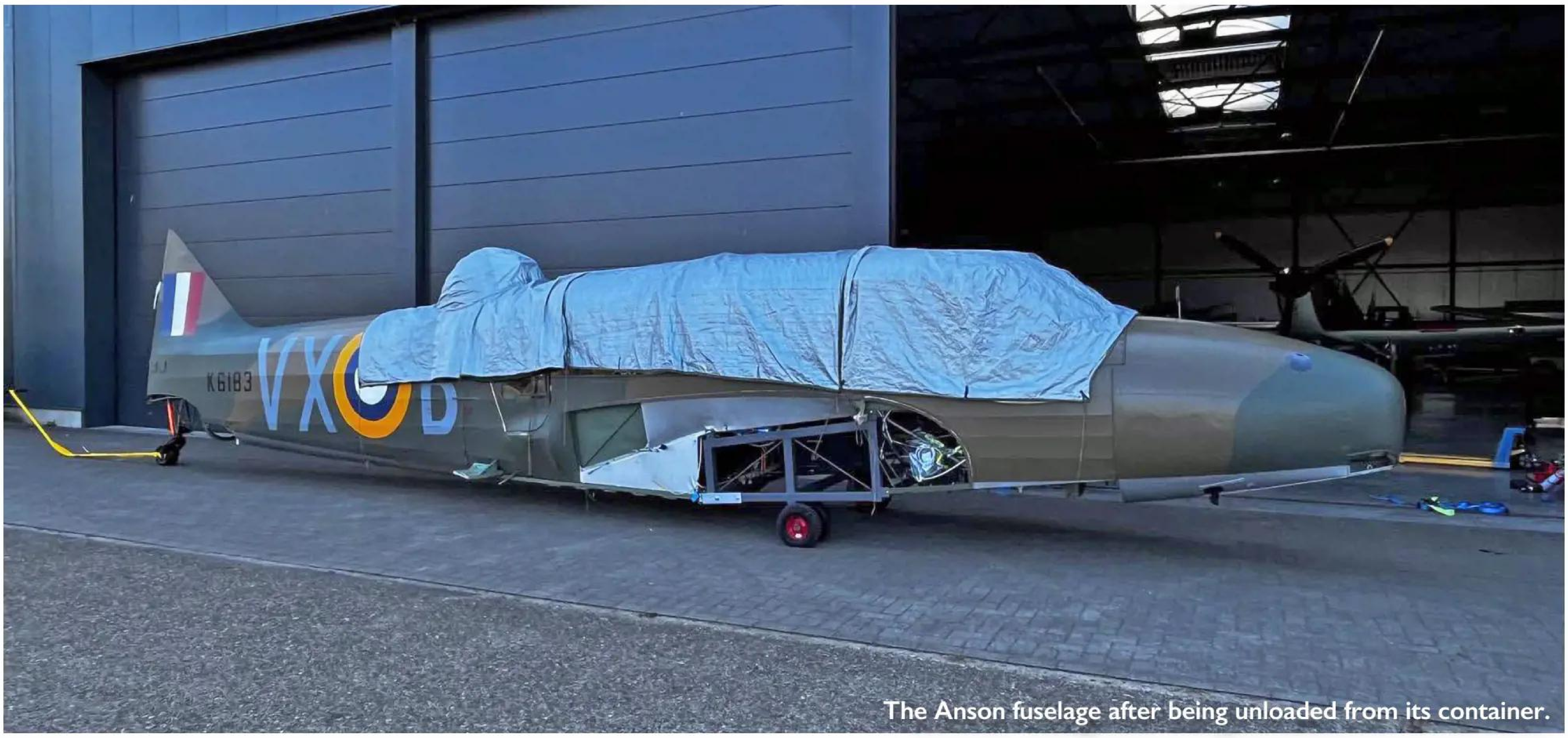
Dave Goss, President
www.gosshawkunlimited.com
Info@gosshawkunlimited.com



Claw machines destroyed the only civilian StarLifter in a matter of minutes. (NAV)

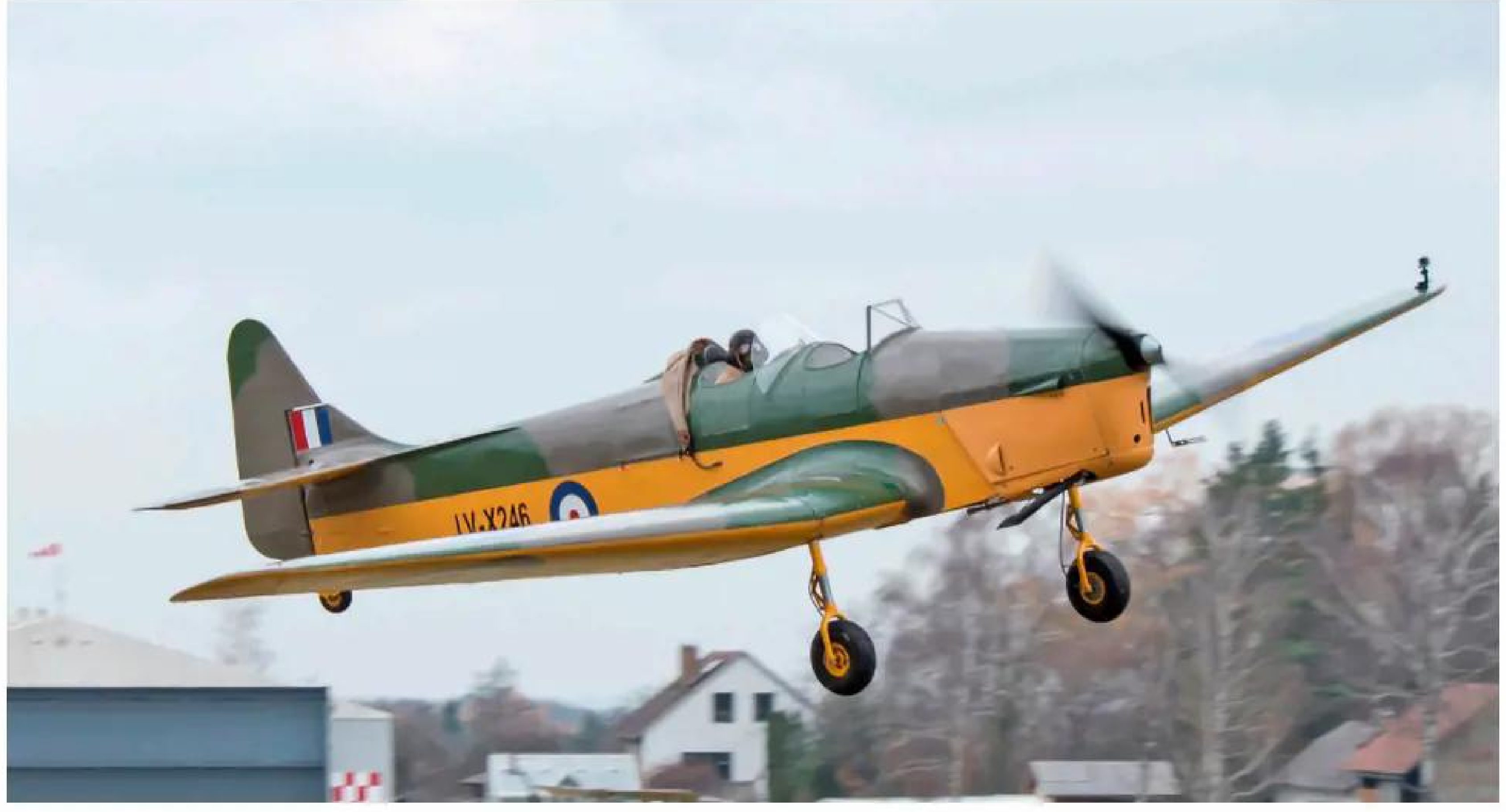


The flight deck will be heading to the Pima Air & Space Museum. In the background, it can be seen how PlaneTags "harvested" fuselage skin from the airborne observatory. (NAV)



The Anson fuselage after being unloaded from its container.

Carefully wrapped Anson center section and landing gear.



The company will also be giving experience flights in the now-rare Miles Magister Mk. I N3827. The aircraft was imported to Czechoslovakia from Argentina in 2019 and was carrying that country's civil registration LV-X246.

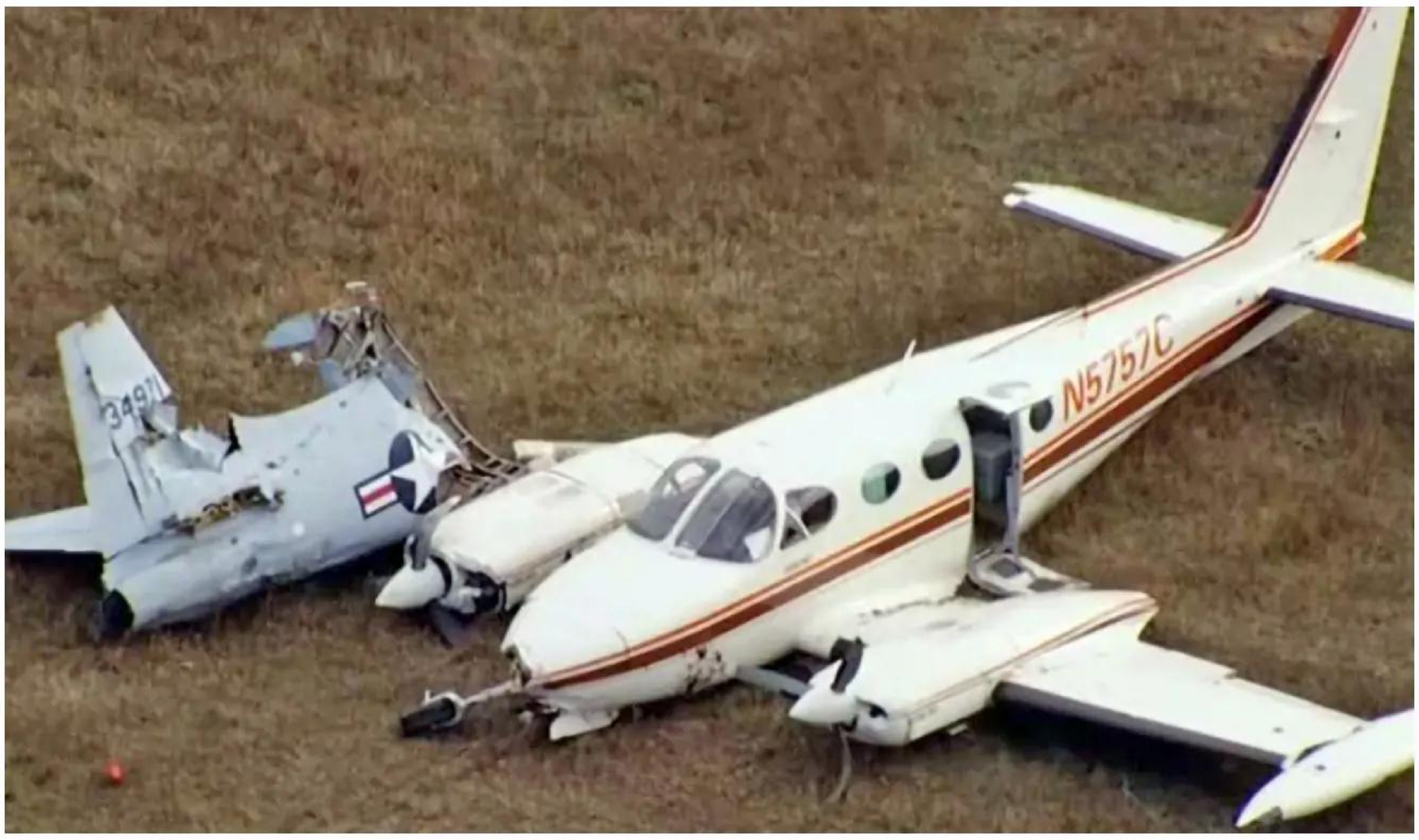
ANSON ARRIVES IN EUROPE

The world's only airworthy Avro Anson Mk. I has safely arrived at its new home in Czechoslovakia after its long journey from Omaka, New Zealand. The early WWII aircraft will now be assembled, thoroughly gone through, placed on the Czech civil registration, and be test-flown. Then, the Anson will be available for airshow work and for experience flights with the capability of carrying three passengers per flight — copilot, navigator/bomb aimer, and radio operator/gunner. We would imagine there will be good business for this classic veteran. Operated by RAF Station Czechoslovakia, the Anson will be in company offering flights with a Tiger Moth, Miles Magister, and Aero 145.

CESSNA VERSUS T-BIRD

A very odd mid-air collision took place this last November at Muskogee, Oklahoma. The pilot Cessna 340A N5757C had reported engine problems and was attempting to land at Muskogee at night with four passengers. Misjudging his approach, the pilot flew into Lockheed T-33A Shooting Star USAF 53-4971 that had been mounted on a pylon as a memorial. The impact took off the right wing of the Cessna and tore the T-Bird in two. If the Cessna had not hit the Lockheed, there is a very good chance it would have crashed with loss of life. As it was, the impact skewed the Cessna around and it flopped into an open field. Both planes were destroyed. Investigation revealed that the "engine problems" were caused by the pilot running them out of fuel.

(continued on page 76)



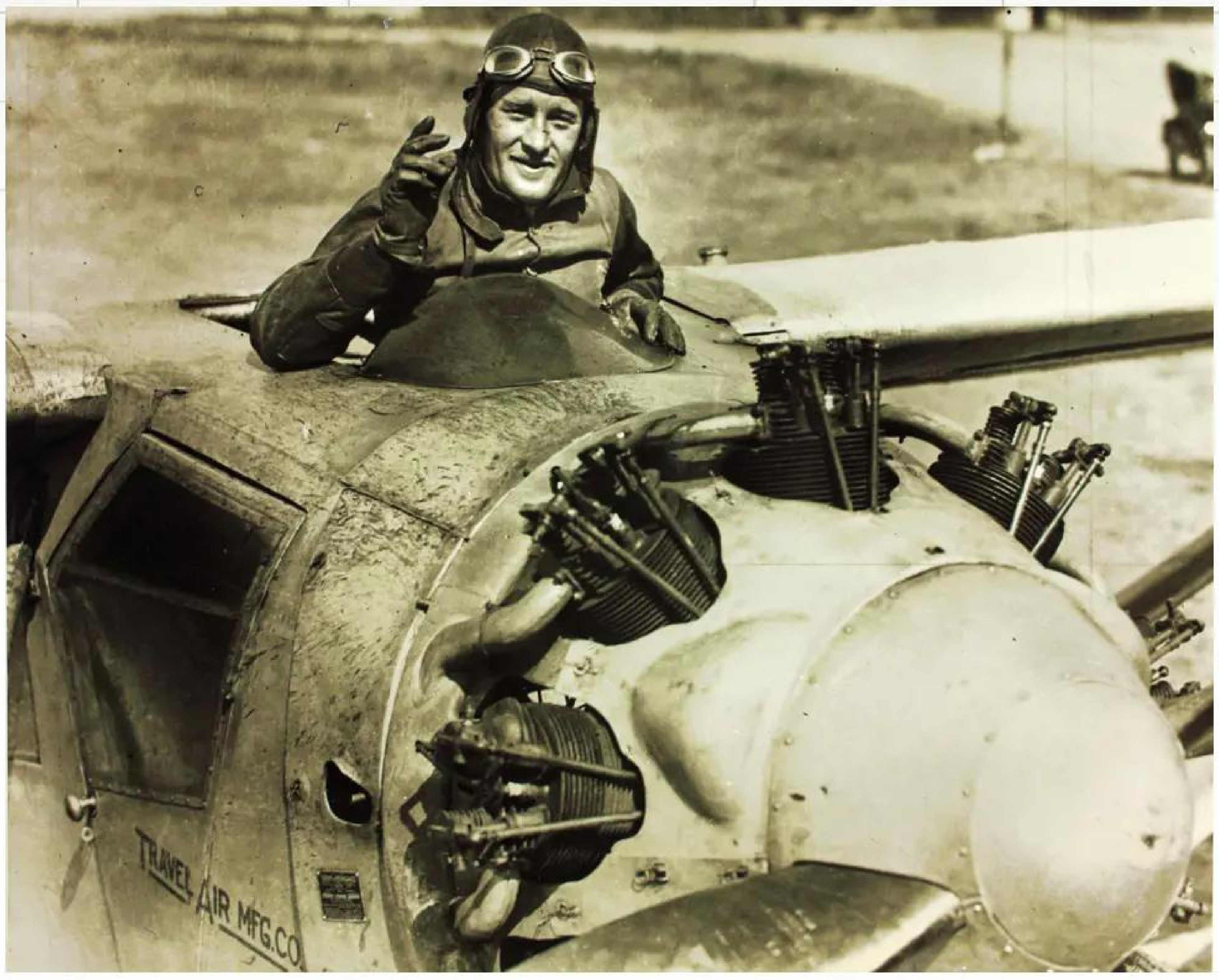
The wrecked Cessna entwined with the tail section of the T-Bird.

LOG ENTRIES
BY MARK BINGHAM

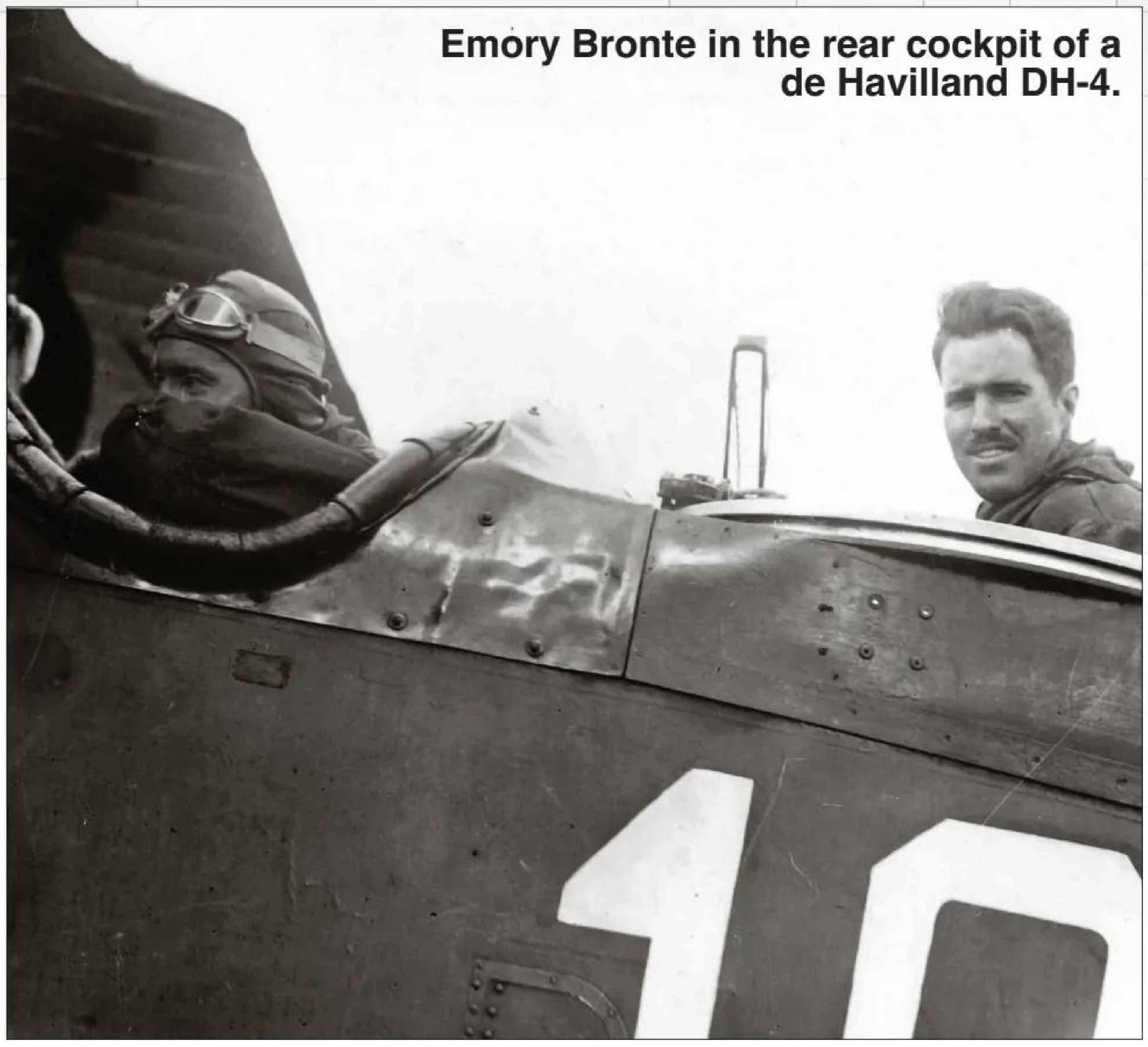
FORGOTTEN CROSSING

THE EPIC PACIFIC FLIGHT OF SMITH AND BRONTE

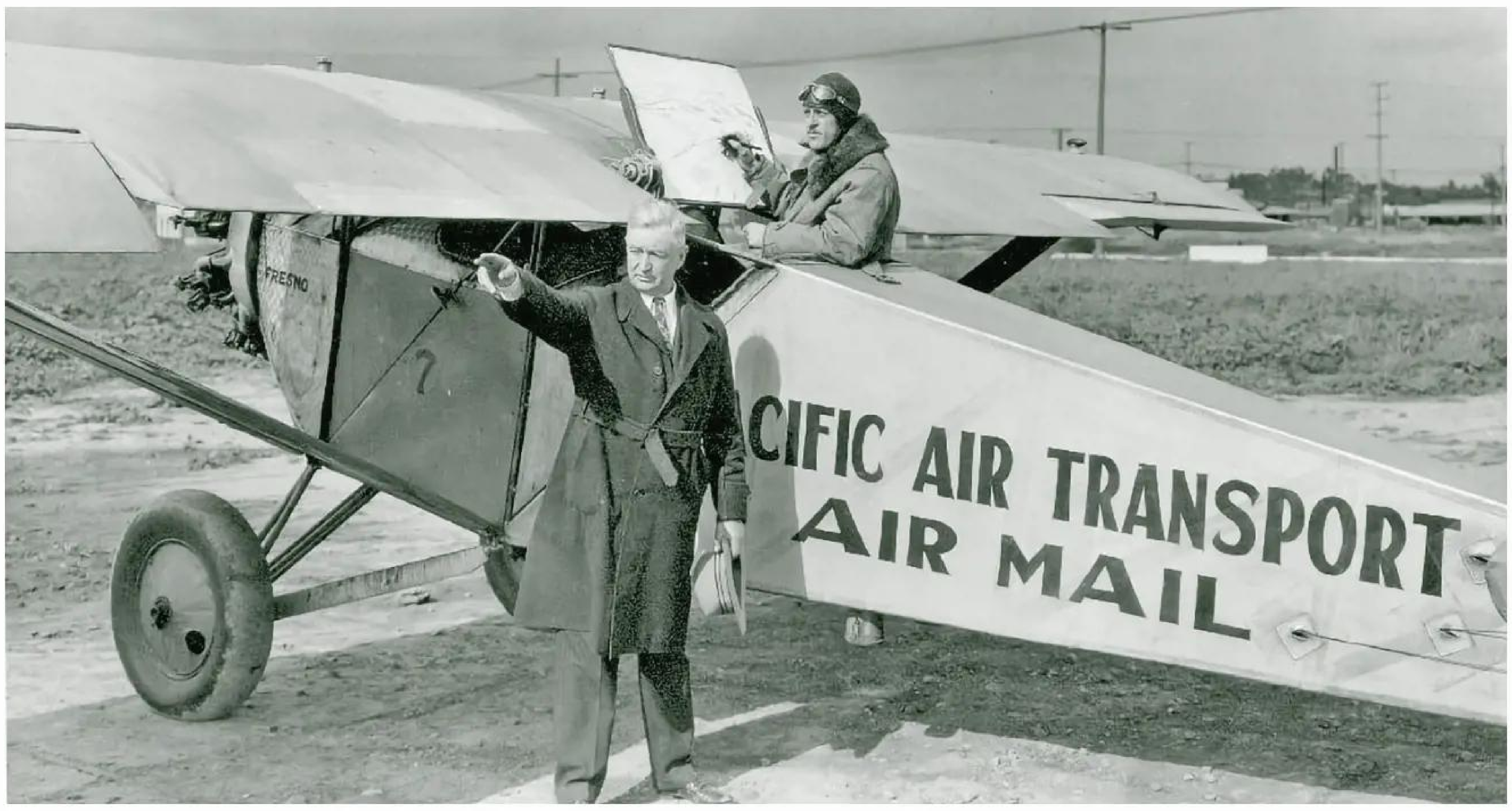
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF KALANI OGATA



Ernie Smith in the cockpit of the oil-splattered Travel Air 5000, the prototype of what would become a series of commercial monoplanes.



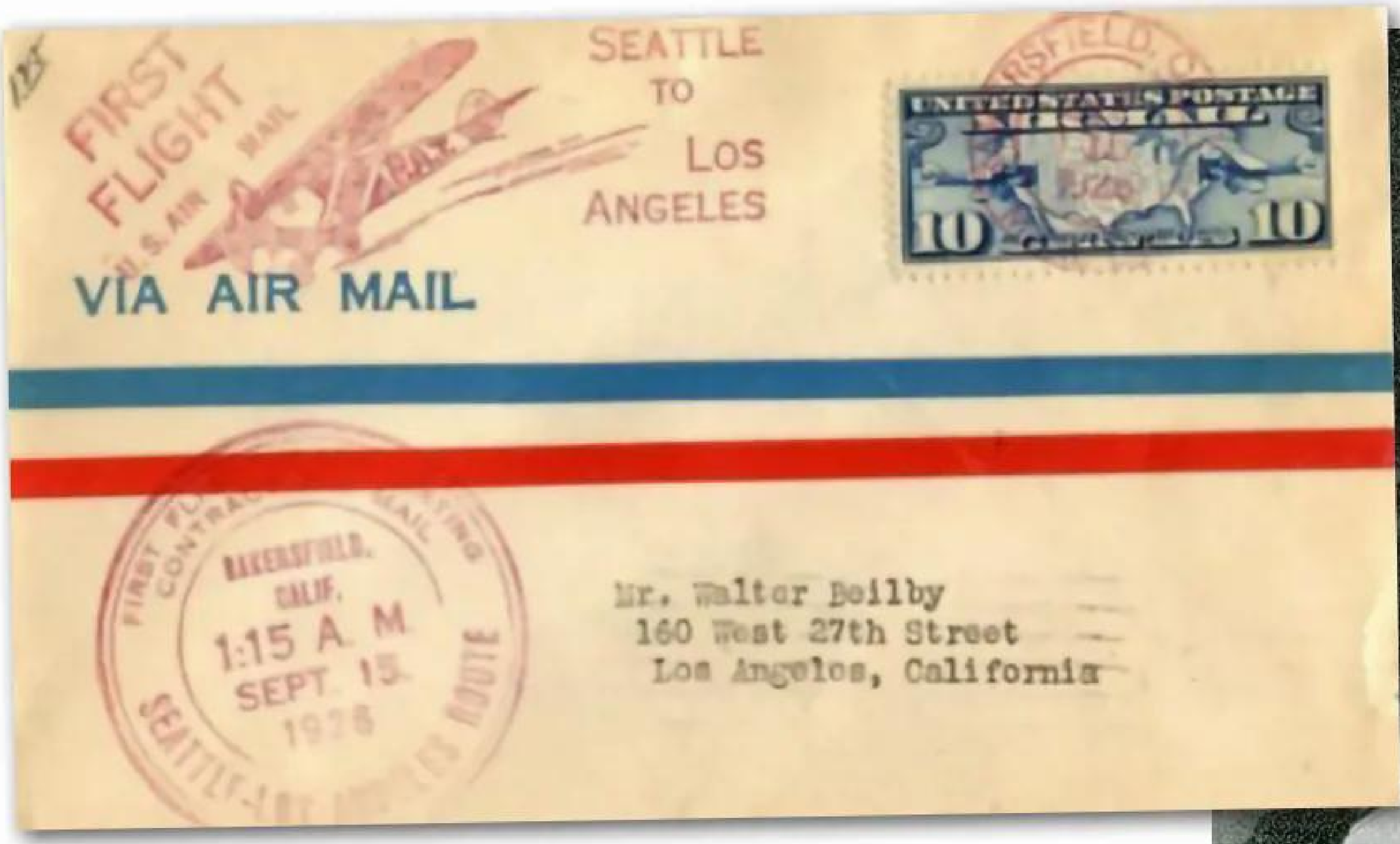
Emory Bronte in the rear cockpit of a de Havilland DH-4.



Going to work for Pacific Air Transport (PAT), Smith quickly became accustomed to the vagaries of flying the long distance between Seattle and Los Angeles in the little Ryan M-1.

The combined mail/passenger flights were not without hazards and in the space of just a few months, PAT lost three of their M-1s in crashes.

The Roaring Twenties. The slang term that defined the decade following the Great War was meant to illustrate that those years comprised a time of America, and indeed the world, letting go in a frenzy of hedonism that was perhaps best encapsulated in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. However, it was also a time of great advancement in just about every field but some of the most significant came within the science of aeronautics. The 1914/1918 War had slaughtered off a generation of the best and brightest but those that survived were hell-bent, when it came to aviation, of flying farther, higher, and faster. As new records were set, greater goals were put into the sights of aviators. Distances that were once perceived as impossible, somehow became feasible. The feats of pilots made them famous and they became the fodder for the next brave daredevils. The military eyed these opportunities as a chance to prove the relevance and capabilities of their new flying divisions. A prior "Log Entries" column (see *Air Classics* August 2023) detailed the September 1925 saga of the Commander John Rodgers' (Naval Aviator #2) flying adventure across the


FIRST FLIGHT
VIA AIR MAIL
SEATTLE TO LOS ANGELES
UNITED STATES POSTAGE AIR MAIL
10 10
BAKERSFIELD, CALIF.
1:15 A. M.
SEPT 15
1926

Mr. Walter Beilby
160 West 27th Street
Los Angeles, California

First Day covers were popular items carried aloft during the early air mail flights and this example came from PAT's first Seattle to Los Angeles flight.

Pacific Ocean in the Naval Aircraft Factory PN-9 flying boat from Oakland to Hawaii. Knowing that the expanse could not be crossed without favorable tailwinds, Rodgers launched anyway and came up short, thus having to "sail" the PN-9 the last 450 miles into the island of Kauai.

Rodgers hoped that he would be permitted to make another flight to Hawaii when the new PN-10 flying boats were completed, but he was killed in a single-engine plane crash in the Delaware River near the Naval Aircraft Factory on 27 August 1926. On 2 July 1926, the Army Air Service was redesignated the Army Air Corps and was given funding for an expansion program. The Army Air Corps successfully tested a new Fokker C-2, a large wooden-wing monoplane powered by three Wright 220-hp radials. Seeking publicity to perhaps sway Congress into releasing more funding for the Corps, the service assembled men to make an over-water crossing from the mainland to Hawaii. Lieutenant Lester J. Maitland was selected as the pilot and Lt. Albert F. Hegenberger was to be the navigator. Both men had previously been stationed in Hawaii and were familiar with the islands. Meticulous preparations were made for testing long-range navigation equipment and radio communications.

Hawaiians were abuzz about flying around the islands and their desire to be connected to the mainland by a possible "air bridge." The Rodgers attempt foretold the impending arrival of trans-Pacific aviation, and full newspaper coverage was given to even the smallest aviation development. The announcement of the Dole Air Derby from Oakland to Wheeler Field on the island of Oahu — to commence in August 1927 — fueled the frenzy. Then came the May 1927 solo crossing of the Atlantic by Charles A. Lindbergh in the *Spirit of St. Louis* and the flame was lit for a new group of aviation fame seekers. Almost overnight, America became "air-minded."

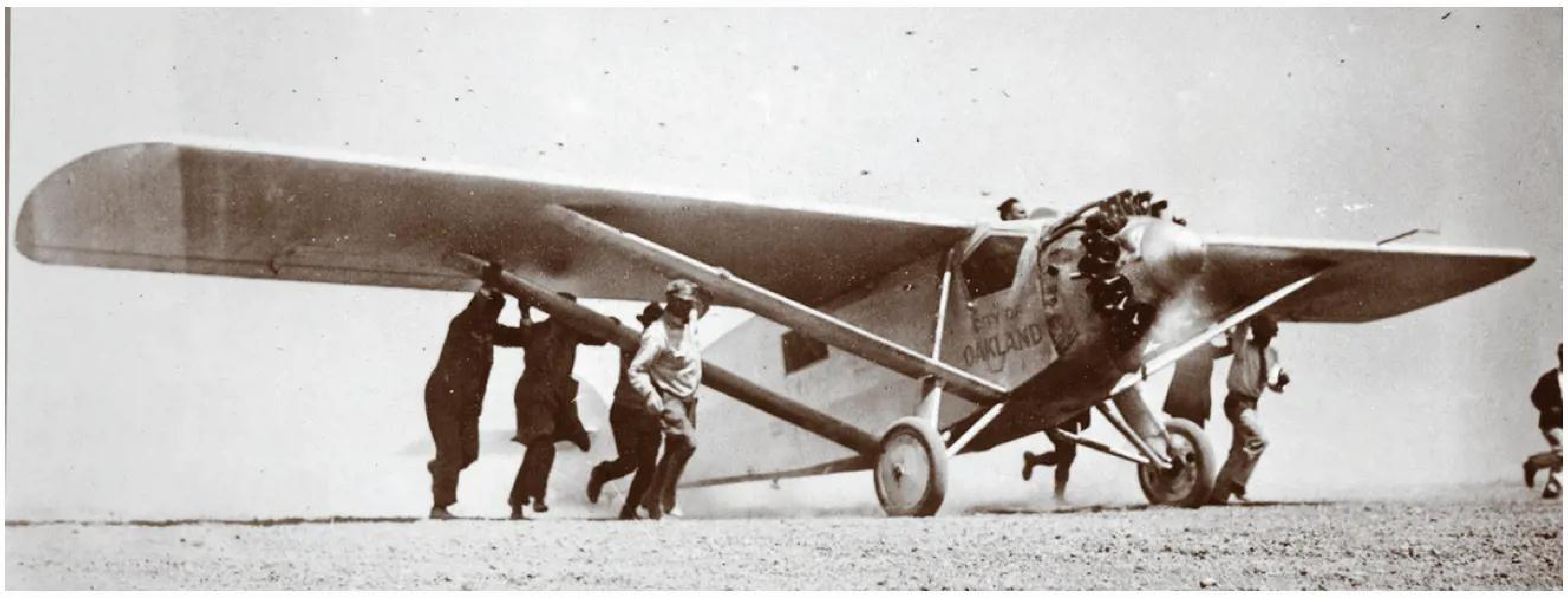
PACIFIC AIR TRANSPORT
AIR MAIL
PACIFIC AIR TRANSPORT

The M-1 was able to haul a decent amount of mail and thus turn a profit for PAT.

Ernest L. Smith had been born in Reno, Nevada, and at age 34 was a former military pilot and a current airmail flyer. As a young child, his family moved to San Francisco just in time for the Great Earthquake of 1906. Later moving across the Bay to Oakland, the teenager completed high school and finished two-years at the University of California Berkely with the ambition of becoming a dentist. However, history had other plans. America entered the Great War and Smith found himself in the Army's medical corps but he became very interested in aviation and somehow got himself a position within the Air Service. He was shipped to Rockwell Field in San Diego where he learned to fly. Instead of battling the Red Baron over the Western Front, Ernie, as he was known to friends, was sent to nearby March Field in Riverside where he risked life and limb teaching students how to master the lumbering Curtiss JN-4 Jenny.

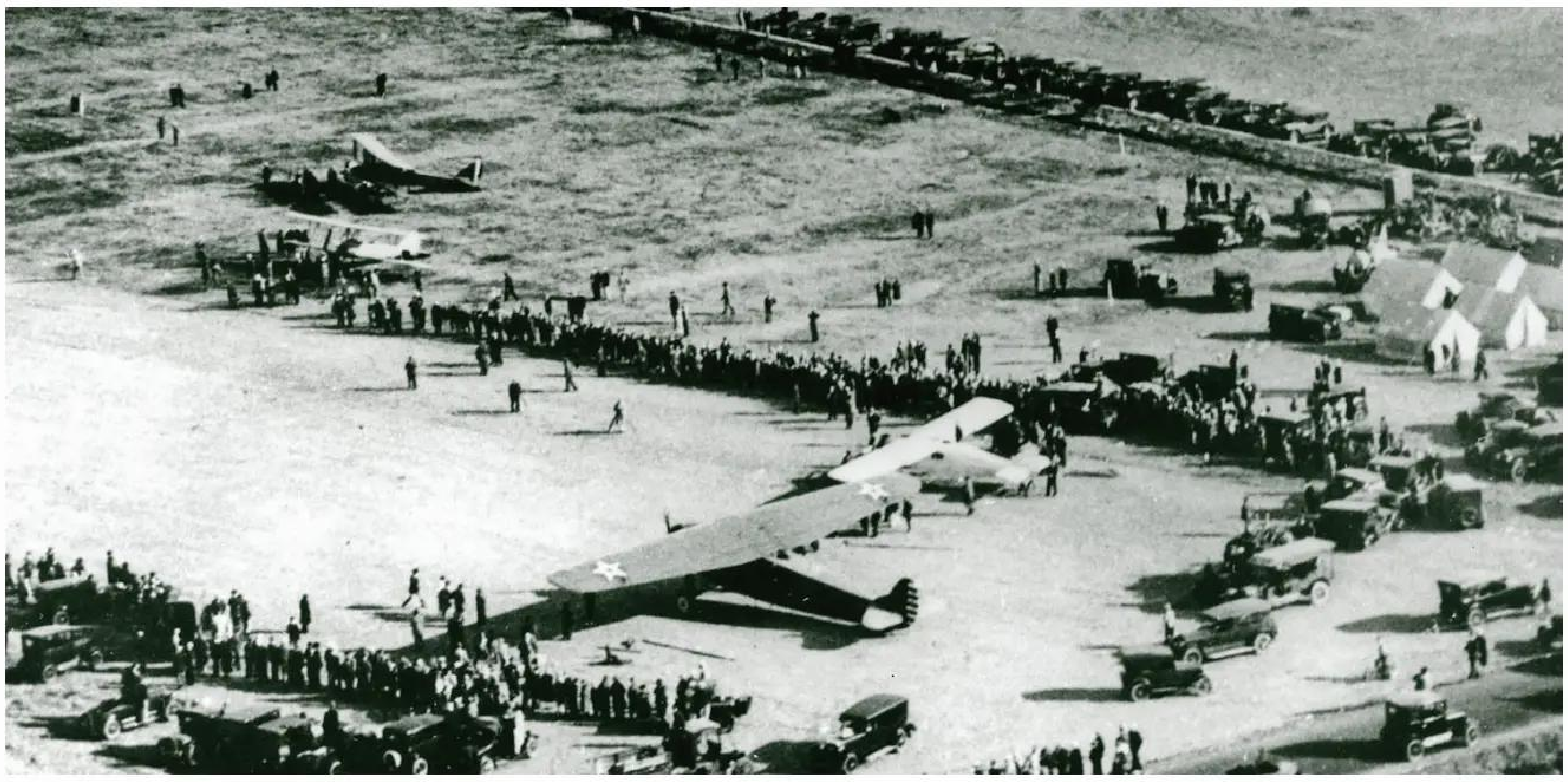
Gorst and Smith both understood the importance of establishing some sort of airways system for the PAT pilots and beacons such as this were installed along the route.

With the end of the war, Ernie decided to stay in the Army Reserve but began casting about to find other work to make a living within the framework of aviation. It wasn't easy since lots of former Air Service pilots were on the same road. Initially, he found employment flying a de Havilland DH-4 over the vast timberland resources

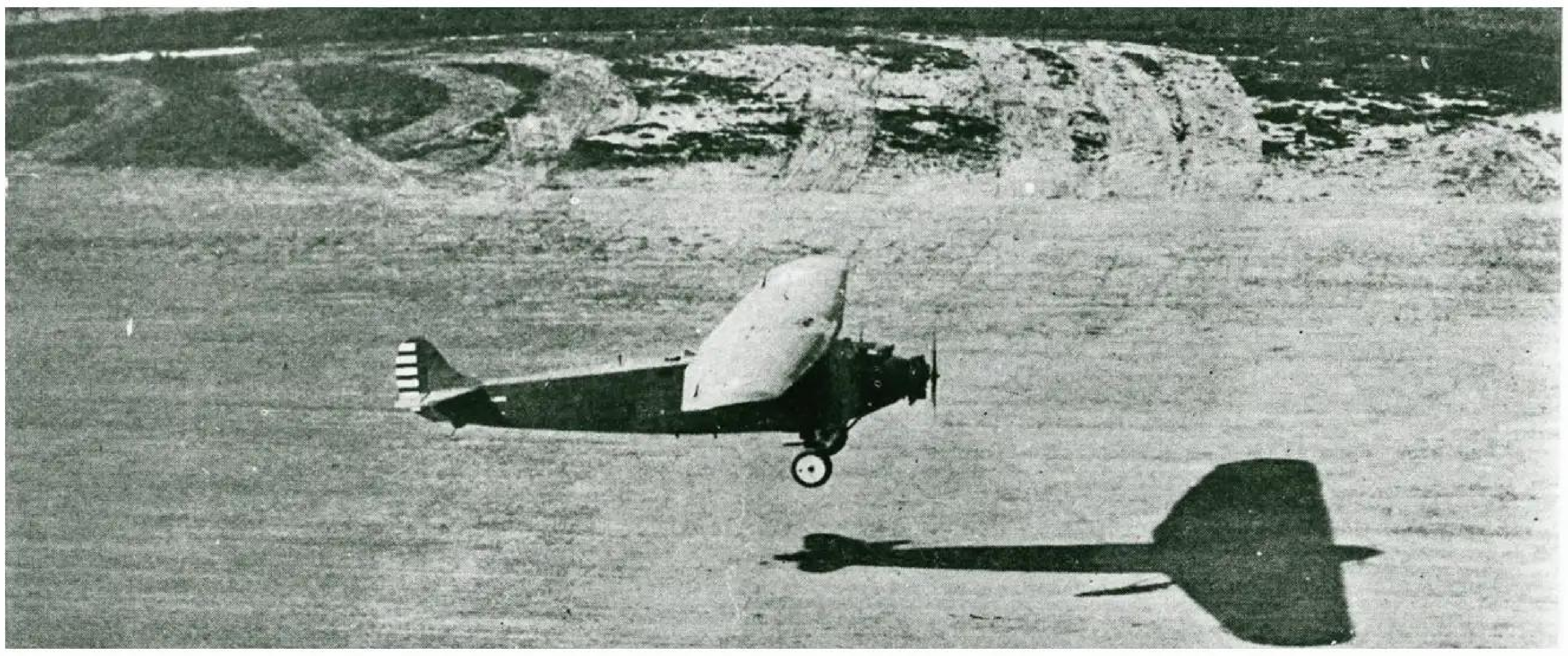


Searching for a larger aircraft, Smith and Gorst visited Travel Air in Wichita. The company had been making an efficient series of biplanes but the pair was interested in a new monoplane — the Model 5000. Designed by Clyde Cessna with input from Lloyd Stearman and Walter Beech, PAT purchased the prototype and operated it for a few months before selling the aircraft to Ernie Smith and his investors.

Described as a "box with wings," the Model 5000's fuselage could accommodate the extra fuel tanks for the California to Hawaii flight. Prior to the trip, the airframe was rebuilt and a new engine installed but it is not known just how much test flying was undertaken before the momentous hop.



The press made much of the "race" between the military pilots in the Fokker C-2 *Bird of Paradise* and the civilian aviators in *City of Oakland*. However, there was no race. Smith was hoping to takeoff near the start of the Fokker and then use the Travel Air's superior speed to pass the tri-motor. The Army fliers were well prepared and departed on time but the Travel Air was plagued with problems and did not depart until after the Fokker arrived in Hawaii.



Bird of Paradise lifts off from Oakland. The Army modified the C-2 wing to have more span for the flight.

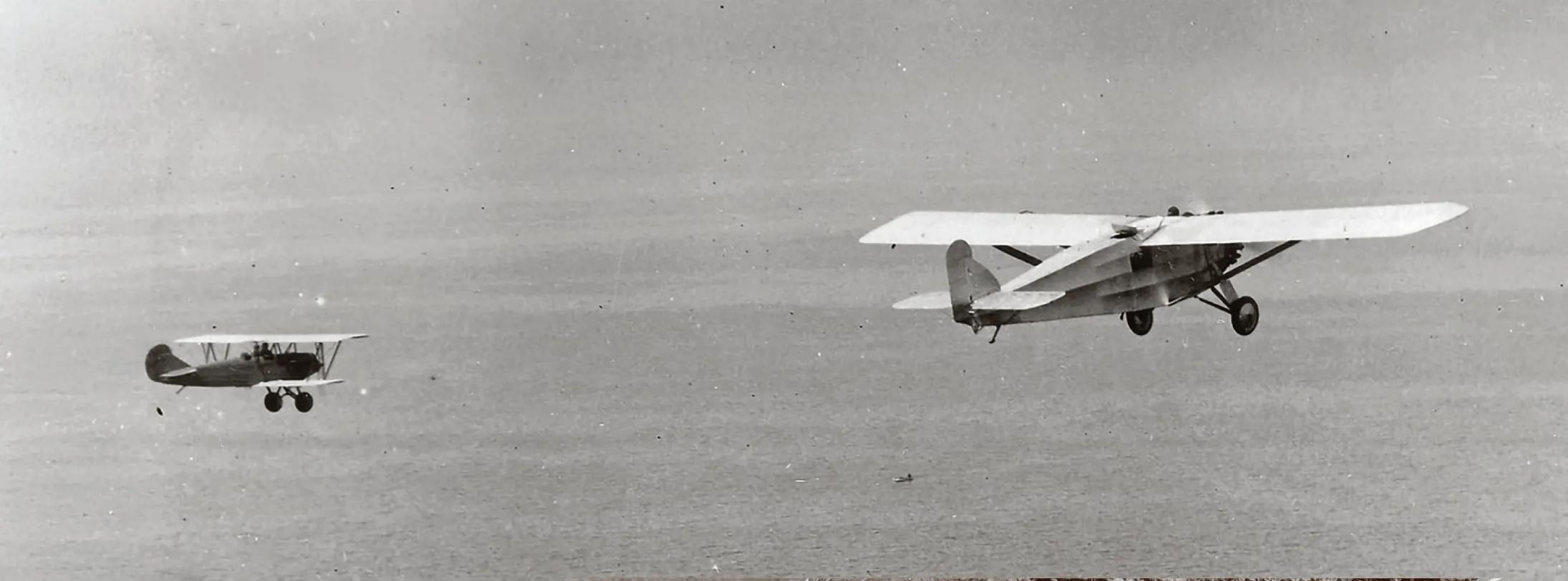
Finally ready, Smith and Bronte prepare to depart the crude 7000-foot dirt runway at Oakland for their epic crossing.

of Pacific Northwest as he worked for the Forest Service an attempt to spot fires before they became major blazes that could devourer valuable natural resources.

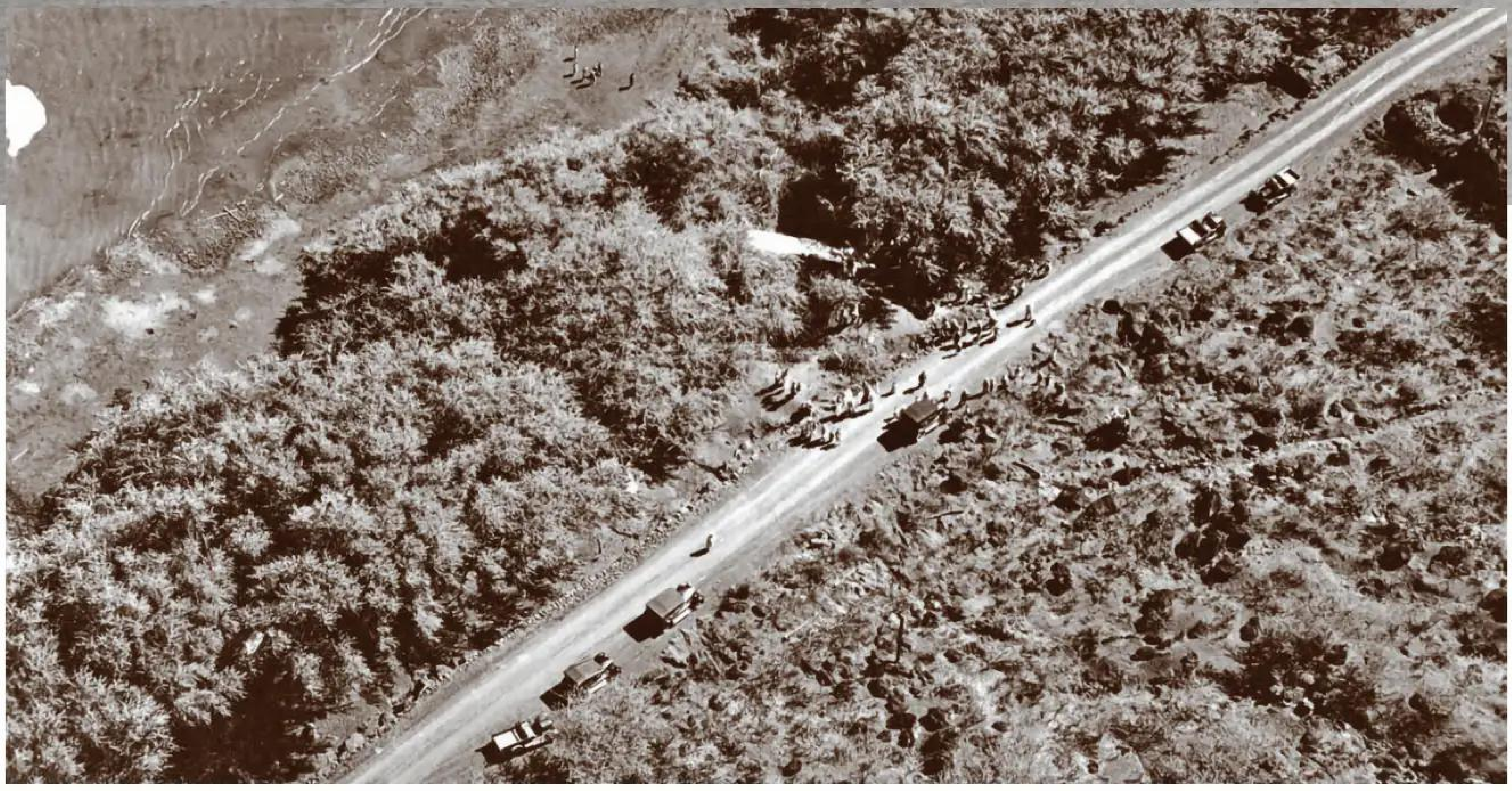
Smith noted with interest that a number of businessmen were attempting to establish scheduled airline services. In Oregon, Vern C. Gorst was the successful operator of a bus line and he saw the potential of air travel — especially if the costs could be decreased with the help of the US government's new airmail program. Gorst formed Pacific Air Transport (PAT) in early 1926 and meet with T. Claude Ryan about creating an aircraft that could fly between Seattle and Los Angeles with stops at a number of cities. This wasn't easy. Most people did not want to fly and the availability of an aircraft to carry passengers/mail was very limited. The new design would have to be capable of flying over 7000-foot mountains while hauling a few passengers and the valuable mail. The resulting aircraft was the Ryan M-1, a small monoplane with a mainly enclosed four-seat cabin that gave room for pilot, three passengers, and mail bags.

Gorst pushed ahead and gave Ryan a contract for ten of the little M-1s. PAT began service on 15 September 1926 after Gorst had been successful in establishing a series of rather makeshift lights and beacons along the way to aid the pilots of the M-1s (three of which were destroyed in the first few months). He also convinced Standard Oil to paint the names of towns on the roofs of prominent buildings with an arrow pointing towards the next town. The M-1s set out from Seattle and headed to Portland, Medford, San Francisco, Fresno, Bakersfield, and finally Los Angeles. A passenger had to pay $132 ($2327 in 2025 dollars) one-way for the 18-hour trip. However, Gorst had an ace up his sleeve — he had obtained airmail route CAM-8 from the Post Office and this provided very needed funds.

Into this heady mix of commercial aviation came Ernie Smith and he signed on as a PAT pilot. His experience flying over the vast forests of Oregon was a definite plus but there was something about flying on a fixed schedule that did not mesh with the wanderlust buried in his soul. It quickly became obvious to Gorst that a larger aircraft would be needed to haul the increasing amount of mail and he



The last photo of *City of Oakland* as it prepares to head out over the Pacific followed by aircraft with press photographers. Note Smith's head above the leading edge of the wing and Bronte's position with windscreen raised.



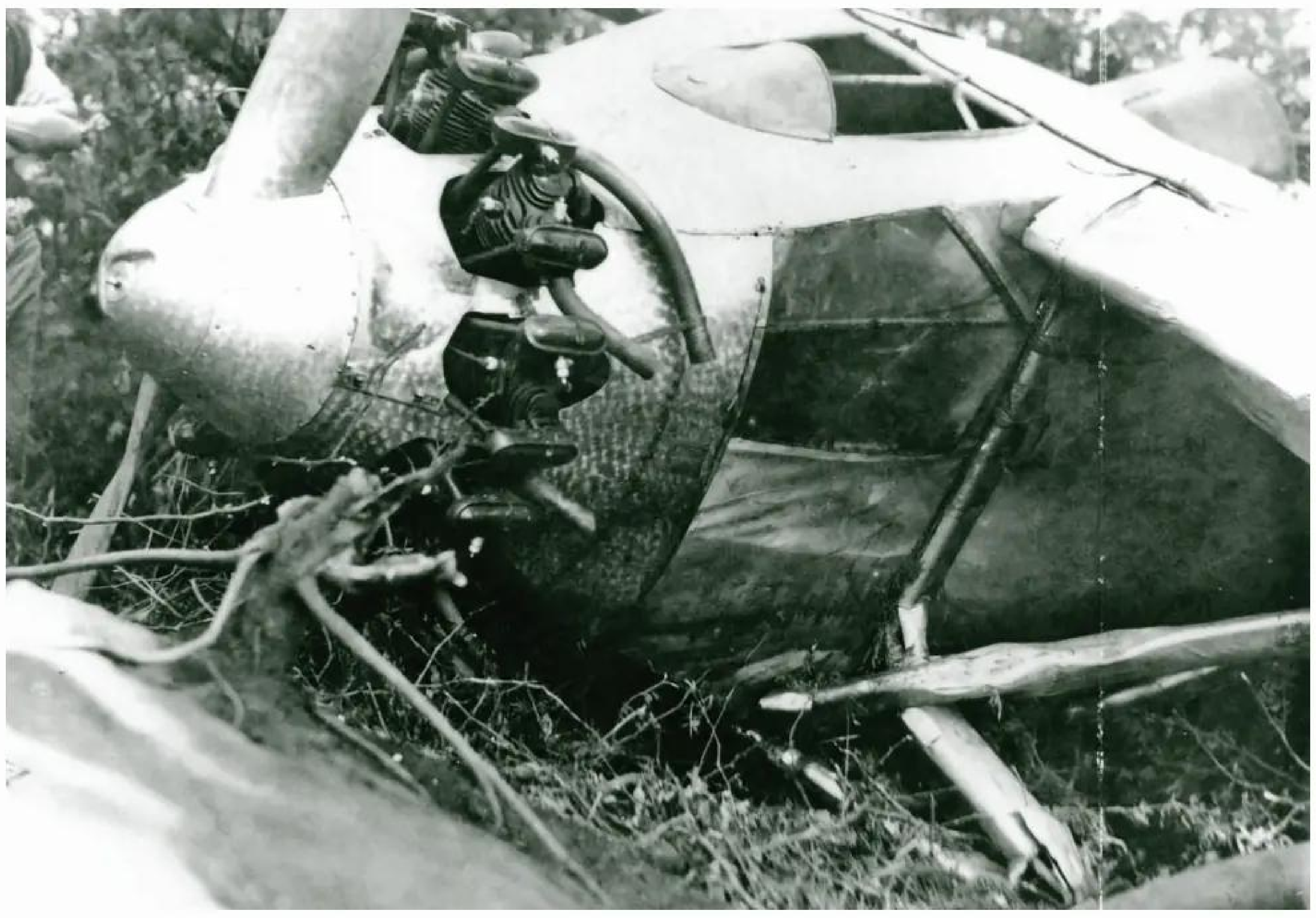
For the want of a few more gallons. The wreck of *City of Oakland* is seen in this aerial view taken from a biplane rented by the local newspaper. The Travel Air was basically destroyed in the crash-landing with wings ripped off and fuselage broken but the airmen survived with just a few bruises. One has to wonder if Smith was trying to put down on the dirt road after the Wright engine ran out of fuel.

took Smith into confidence in the search for a new plane. The search led them to Wichita, Kansas, and the small company of Travel Air. During 1926, designer Clyde Cessna had created a boxy monoplane that was a big step away from the earlier biplanes. The design was further modified by Cessna, Lloyd Stearman, and Walter Beech during the fall of 1926 with the designation Travel Air Model 5000. Fitted with the reliable Wright J-4 Whirlwind, the fuselage was constructed of welded steel tubing while the flying surfaces were of wood and the whole aircraft covered in fabric. Some observers called the Model 5000 "a box with a wing" and they were not incorrect. The aircraft got Smith thinking — but his thoughts were not on a mail/passenger hauler. He knew that boxy fuselage could accommodate extra fuel tanks and that the 312-sq-ft wing had the ability to lift a prodigious load.

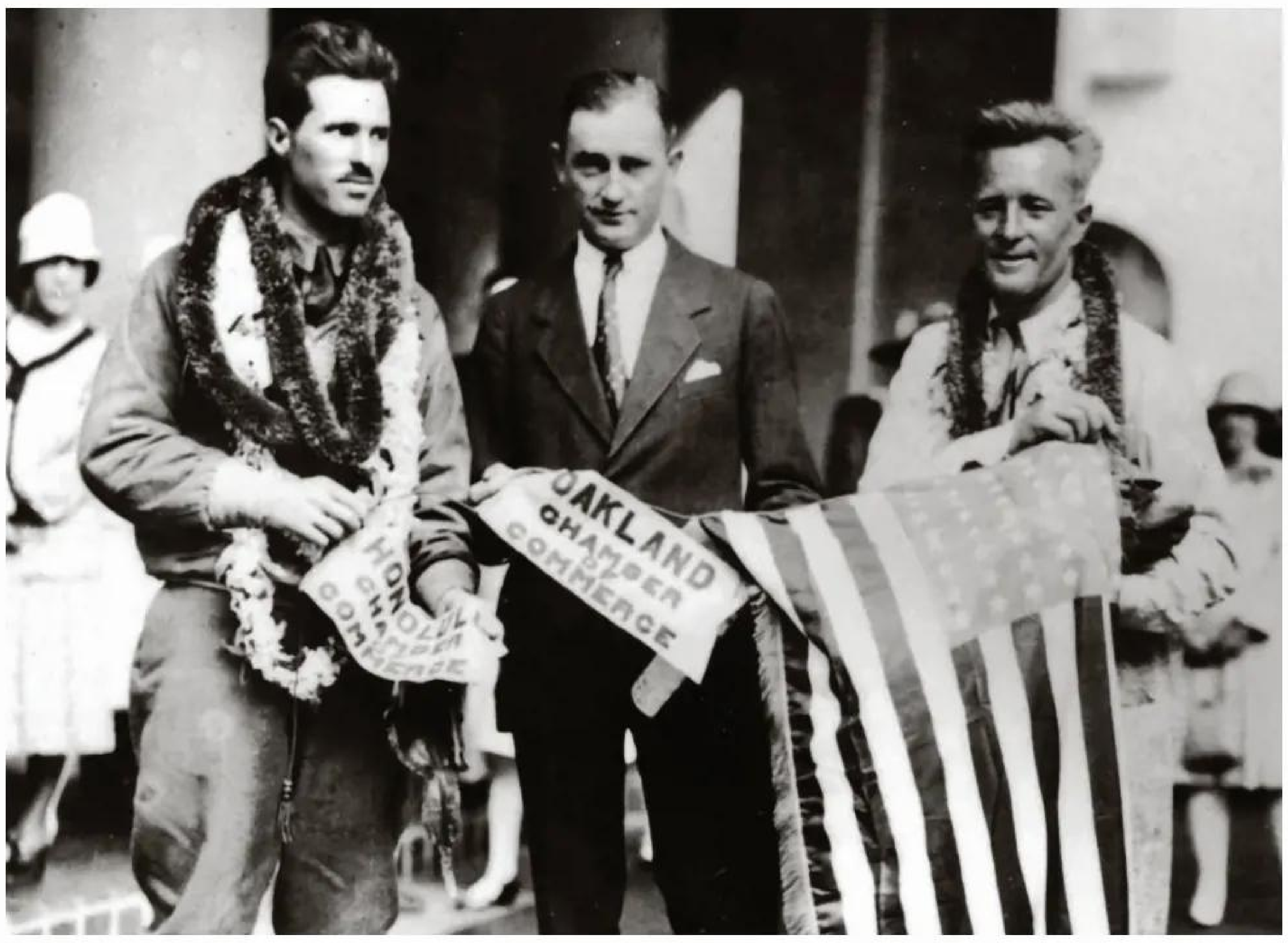
With the Travel Air 5000 in mind, Smith began to make plans. With reliability in aircraft and aero engines increasing, more long-distance flights were being made. Such flights would, if successful, bring fame and perhaps fortune. Being based on the West Coast, Smith was beckoned by the Hawaiian Islands but there was nothing between California and Hawaii except water (some 2405 miles of it from Oakland). Going over the attributes of the Travel Air with Gorst, a decision was made and PAT would purchase the prototype in April 1927. The next month would see Lindbergh make his historic flight in the Ryan NYP, a plane not dissimilar to the M-1. Immediately following this, James Dole, of Hawaiian pineapple fame, announced a $25,000 first prize for the aircraft to complete the California to Hawaii flight. The craze was now on and wealthy businessmen were soon offering prizes for flights between a wide variety of locales.

It does not seem that Smith was interested in competing in the Dole event but that he wanted to strike out alone. Finding a group of investors, Smith made a deal with PAT to assume ownership of the Travel Air. The aircraft had flown successfully with PAT for two months so Smith knew the design was sound. The investors were headed by Anthony Parente and a contract was created that would see investors own a share of the plane according to how much they put in. The pilot and navigator would also own a share. This group had frequent disagreements and the press

The Army picked up the downed fliers and rushed them to Wheeler Field where they arrived to a great deal of acclaim. Neither looked worse for wear.



Close-up of the wrecked *City of Oakland*. The steel tube structure around the pilot is evident but hours upon hours of having his head in the open with the Wright just a couple feet away must have been very tiring for Smith.



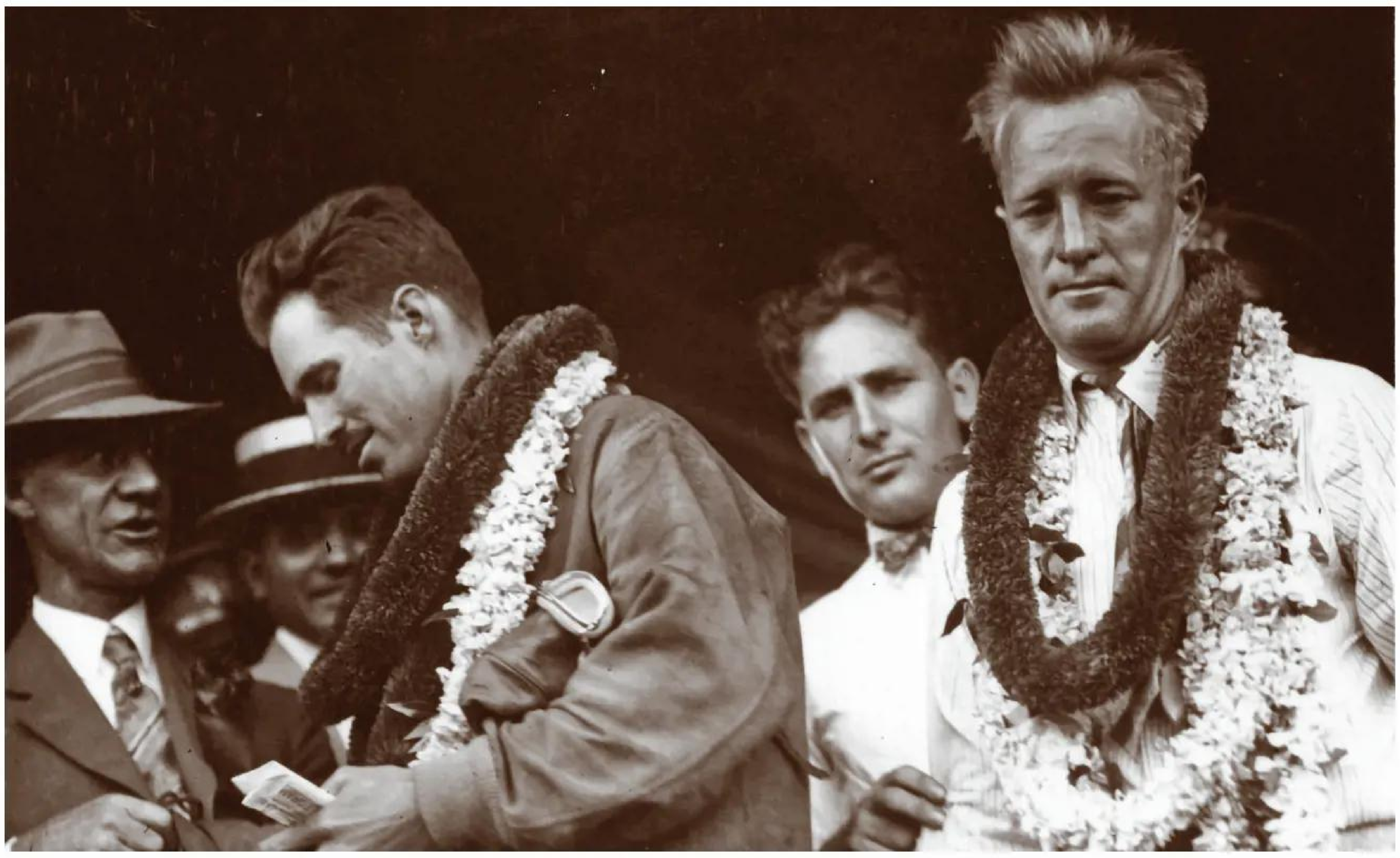
Several days of festivities were accorded the record fliers but their epic crossing would soon be forgotten in the disaster that became the Dole Derby.

learned of this so the battling between investors became front-page news as interest in the epic flight grew. Working quickly, extra fuel tanks were installed in the fuselage while a new powerplant was also added but Smith knew that he would also need a navigator. Smith had not registered for the Dole Air Derby, but he wanted the distinction of being the first to cross the Pacific to Hawaii. He was completely aware of the efforts of Maitland and Hegenberger with their Fokker C-2 tri-motor and he realized that if he was going to be the first, he was going to have to act fast. The airfield at Oakland was crude and basically unprepared so Smith tried to utilize the Army's Crissy Field which was also a few miles closer to the final goal. At 3000 feet in length, Crissy was too short for the Fokker. The Army refused, stating the field was not for use by civilians. Actually, the two crews got along quite well and each would help the other. Smith finally selected C.H. Carter to be his navigator. Unlike the Army's Fokker that had three engines and the finest in navigation and radio equipment, Smith's Travel Air had one engine and one simple compass. When the weather unexpectedly improved, the Army was ready. Smith was not.

On the early morning of 28 June 1927 at the Oakland Airport (whose crude runway was 7000 feet in length), Maitland and Hegenberger started up the three Whirlwind engines on their Fokker that had been christened *Bird of Paradise* and headed out past the Golden Gate. Smith felt he could still beat the Army with his faster Travel Air, which now carried the name *City of Oakland*. Newspapers had been posting regular headlines about the "rivalry" between the Army and civilian flyers. Two hours later, Smith departed with Carter but the pair returned within an hour, stating a problem with the altimeter. This was fixed, more fuel added, and the Travel Air took off again. A cracked windscreen at the navigator's position forced the pair to promptly return to Oakland again. At this point, Carter immediately decided to abandon the venture and departed the airport.

At 3:20 am on 29 June 1927, Maitland and Hegenberger sighted the lighthouse on Kauai and they knew they had made it to Hawaii, flying 2425 miles from Oakland to Kauai in 23 hours. Kauai was 75 miles from Oahu and there was at least one more hour before daybreak. They did not want to jeopardize their landing on Oahu by flying around mountains, heavy clouds and rain in the dark, so they decided to circle Kauai until dawn. At 6:29 am Maitland landed the Fokker at Wheeler Field, having flown a total of 25 hours, 49 minutes. Thousands of well-wishers and dignitaries welcomed the adventurous fliers, and they all knew that soon aviation would connect Hawaii to the mainland.

Back in Oakland, Smith was frustrated with his attempts at finding a new navigator. Smith was aware of the success of Maitland and Hegenberger, but he remained certain that he could still be the first civilian to cross the Pacific. Some newspapers stated that Smith was "unsporting" by attempting to go before the start of the Dole event but he stated in no uncertain terms that he was not interested in the Dole prize. He was interested in becoming the first civilian to accomplish the flight. A young master mariner by the name of Emory B. Bronte had watched Maitland and Hegenberger



Both Bronte and Smith had charismatic personalities and quickly became favorites of the press. A very tired Smith looks at the camera while Bronte signs an autograph.

fly past the Golden Gate (the famed bridge was still ten years in the future), had been inspired by Lindbergh's success crossing the Atlantic, and had read about Carter abandoning Smith's venture. Bronte had gone to sea at age 15 and joined the Navy during the Great War. After that, he worked for several large steamship companies and worked his way up from third mate to master. Attracted to the air, he had taken lessons and soloed in a Jenny but had not received a pilot's certificate. He had authored a book on navigation and was planning on entering law school. Bronte contacted Smith's agent and eagerly offered his navigation services. An interview was set up for the next day and Smith promptly signed Bronte up for the trip.

However, there were other problems. The in-fighting between the investors was now daily news in the papers while Smith was having his own doubts about the ability of the single-engine craft to make the grueling flight. The newspapers were speculating that the entire *City of Oakland* enterprise would be cancelled while also reporting on the buildup for the Dole event that would take place in August.

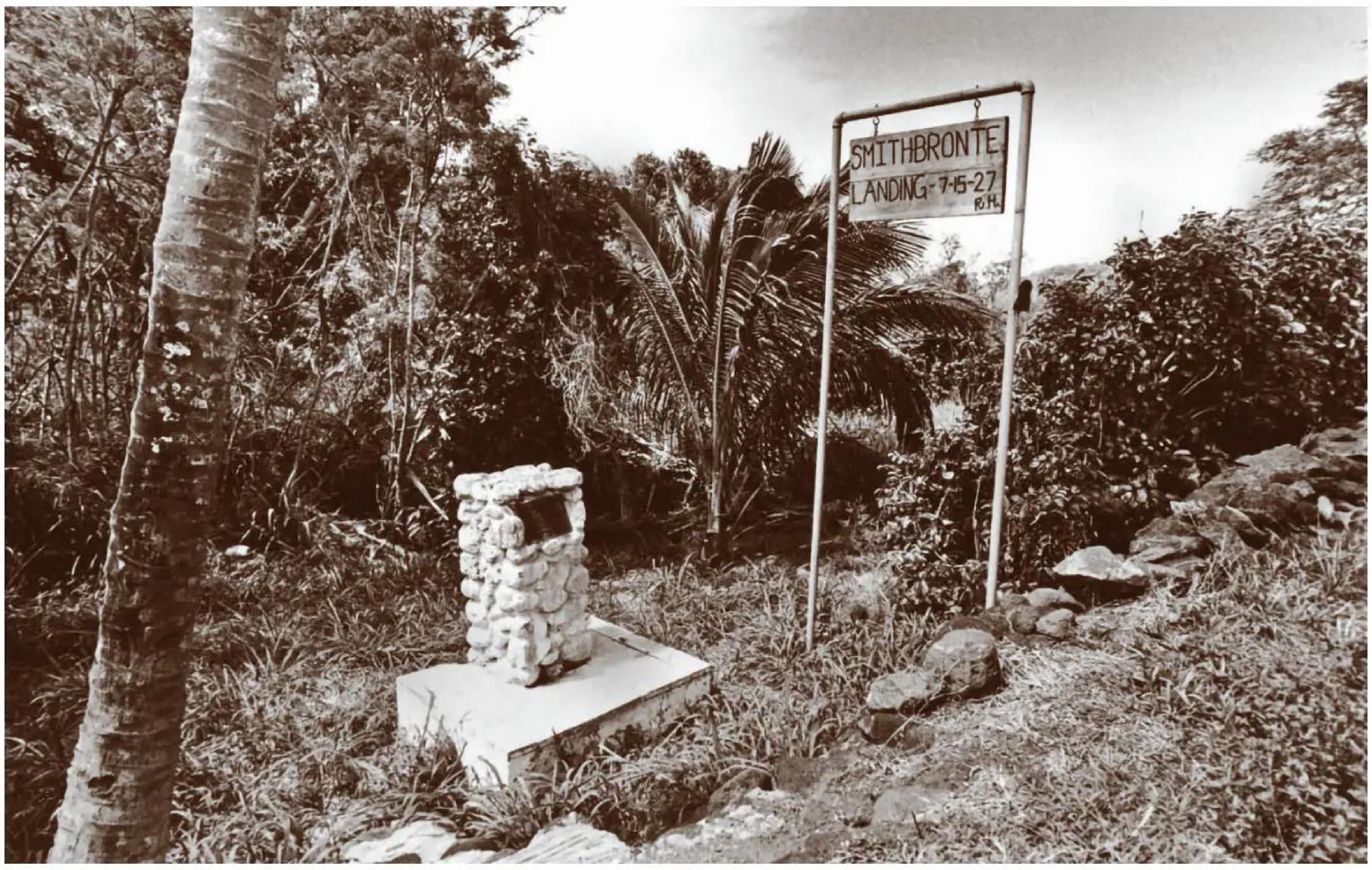
After inspecting the Travel Air, Bronte insisted on a radio, charts, compasses, a sextant, and a mechanic's inspection of the Wright engine. Two weeks later, a short wave radio transmitter and receiver, and three compasses were installed in the aircraft. Maitland and Hegenberger had just returned from Hawaii by ship and came by the airport after a massive welcome from the city to wish the fliers good luck and to discuss their experiences on the Pacific crossing. Smith decided to take along four carrier pigeons to fly position messages back to California. Bronte set his course for the island of Maui, as it provided a more central aiming point, better visual landmarks, and use of the Army's radio beacon at Paia on Maui that was connected to the Presidio at San Francisco.

On 14 July 1927, Smith and Bronte started their Wright radial, but the weight of 370 gallons of fuel prevented the Travel Air from moving its tires out of the sandy loam without the pushing assistance of a few of the 10,000 assembled spectators. Bumping along the dirt runway (then known as Bay Farm Island Airfield), the Travel Air suddenly dipped into a depression and ground-looped. Frustrated, Smith taxied back for a second takeoff attempt after burning some of their precious fuel, which later proved to be a dire mistake. At 10:40 am. the monoplane lifted off and Bronte commenced transmitting and receiving radio signals. A thick layer of fog hung over the Golden Gate, and the pair circled the Bay to gain some height but still had to fly through the top layer of fog. Two pigeons were released when the fliers were 200 miles over the sea, and the remaining two pigeons were released the following morning. None of the pigeons ever returned to their lofts back in California. At last minute, they had packed in an inflatable rubber raft along with food and water for ten days.

The National Air and Space Museum holds a unique piece of memorabilia associated with the flight. It is a personal scrapbook that is covered with Tahitian tapa cloth and chronicles the Smith-Bronte flight. Included in the scrapbook are 30 letters, 23 telegrams, 197 photos, 357 news articles, and 20 miscellaneous items. It also includes an August 1917 Hawaiian Islands map that was used by the pair. There is also a 6 September 1934 letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt presenting Bronte with the Distinguished Flying Cross.

For a good portion of the flight, a layer of fog was beneath them but the air was quite smooth and optimistic reports were issued. At 800 miles out, the pair was flying 120 mph at 6000 feet, which was faster than Maitland and Hegenberger's speed in the Fokker. Smith and Bronte would not be the first to make the Pacific crossing, but Smith was determined to be the fastest. The pair also wanted to make sure that the local politicians that tried to cancel their flight by saying the Travel Air was unsafe were very wrong.

As the pair neared the Hawaiian Islands, their spirits soared. Moments later, their elation was crushed as the Wright engine started to splutter. Smith soon recognized that they were running out of fuel. He then switched fuel tanks and started hand-pumping fuel to the Wright engine. Smith calculated that they had less than one-hour of fuel remaining,



A memorial was erected to mark the spot where *City of Oakland* crash-landed.

A bit different this time. Smith and Bronte cross the Pacific in a Boeing 377 to mark the 30th anniversary of their epic flight.

but Bronte estimated that they were still four hours away from the island of Maui. Bronte sent "SOS" messages to the various naval and merchant ships monitoring their flight, estimating the latitude and longitude of where he thought they would ditch into the Pacific. Numerous ships altered their course to the projected ditching area.

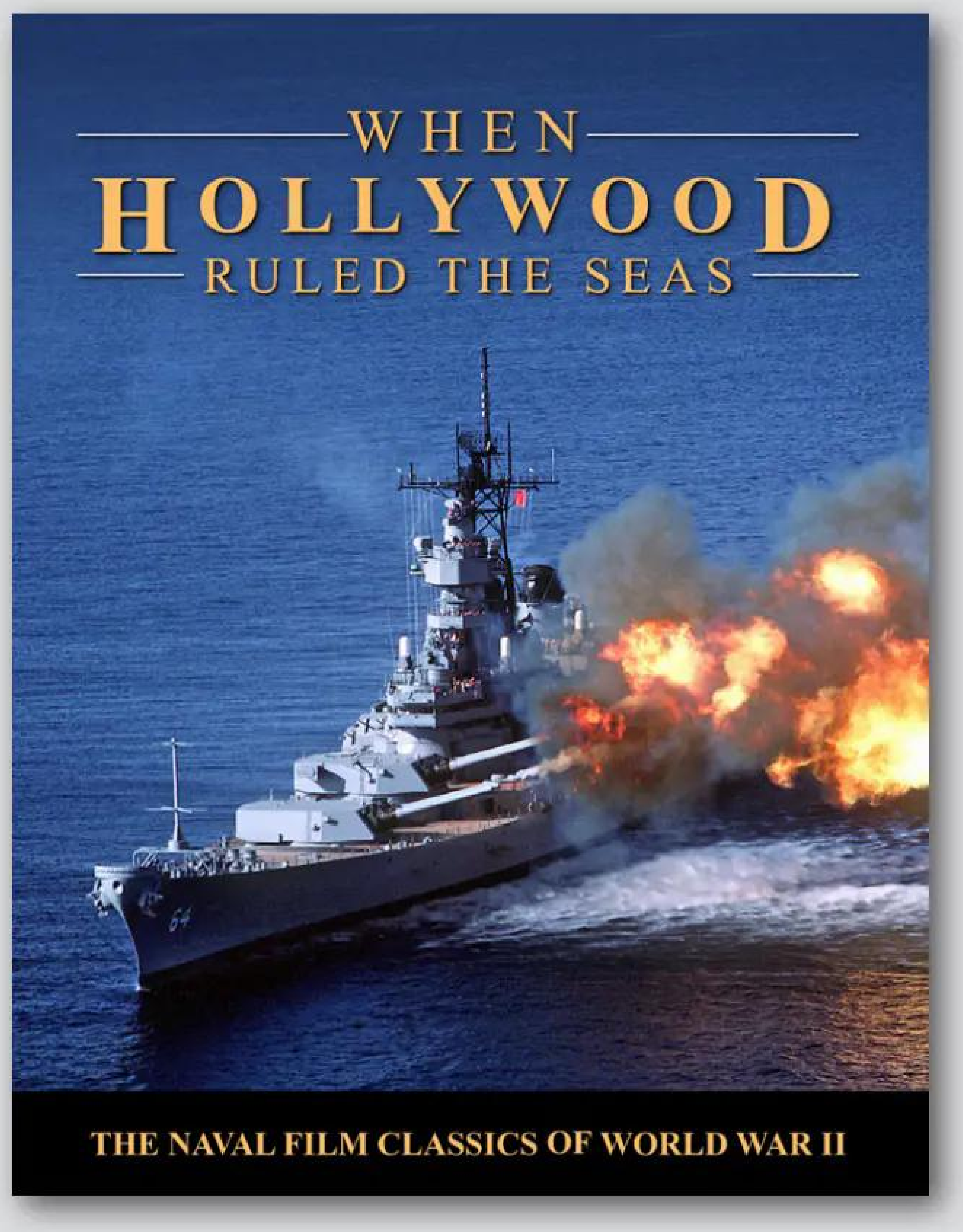
Smith took measures to conserve fuel and slowed the Travel Air down to 100 mph. They descended to 100 feet above the water so they could see any ships on the surface, but their radio trailing antenna caught on a wave and snapped off at the end of the fuselage. At about 100 miles from Maui, Bronte prepared the life raft for ditching. Soon, the volcanic cone of Mauna Kea on the big island of Hawaii was sighted and, moments later, they could see the volcanic cone of Haleakala on the island of Maui. Bronte reported these sightings on the radio, but the loss of their antenna caused the signal to be too weak to be received by any of the rescue ships. Newspapers rushed editions to print stating the pair had ditched in the Pacific and rescue "was imminent."

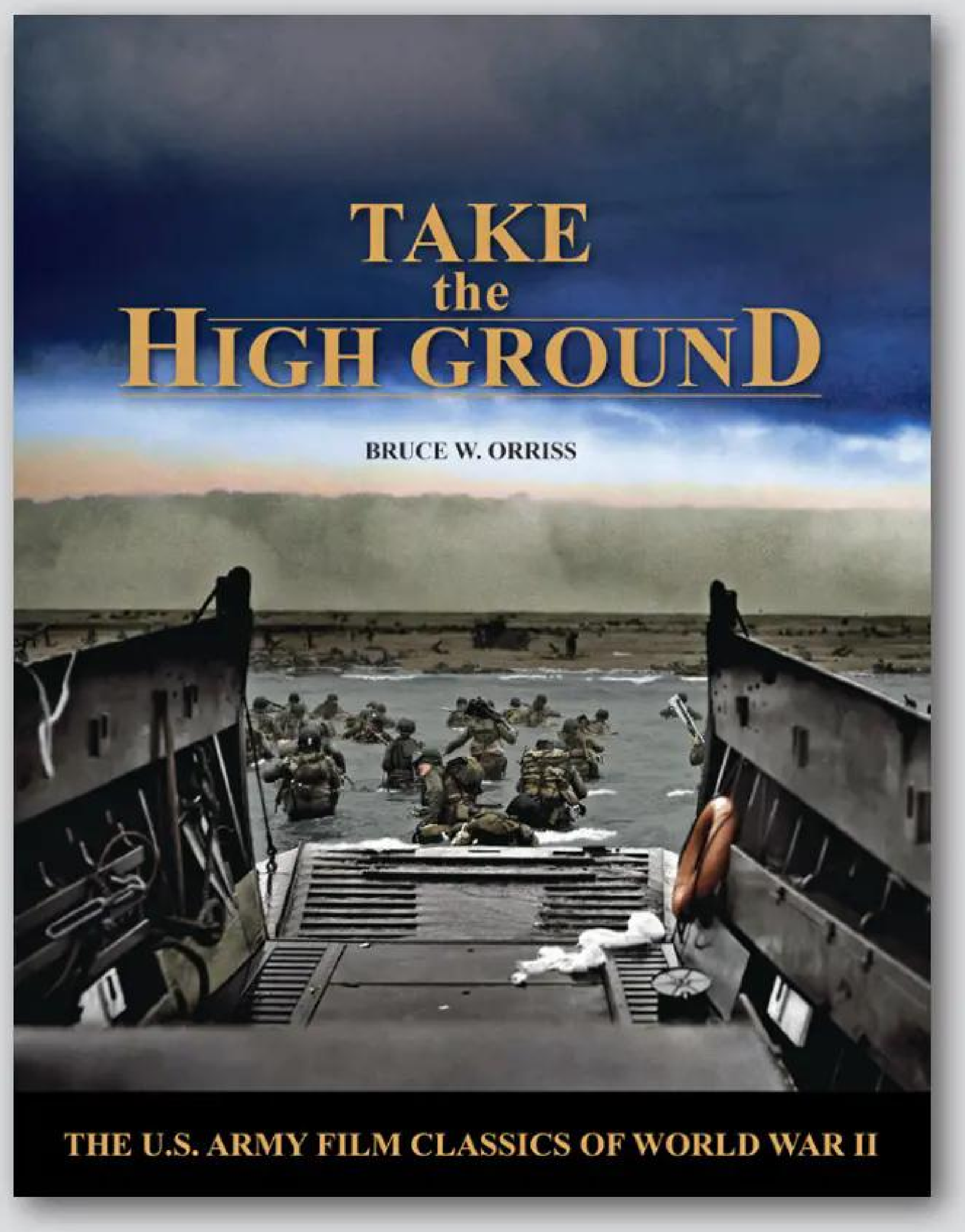
Although the fuel gauges read empty, the Travel Air made landfall over the sugar cane fields surrounding Kahului, Maui. Smith knew that the aircraft would be destroyed if it landed in the cane fields, so the pair decided to try to reach Wheeler Field since fuel seemed to be reaching the Wright engine. After flying only 18 miles further, they were over the southwest shore of island of Molokai and the engine quit. The island was heavily wooded and uneven. Smith looked for the softest clump of keawe trees near a road. The Travel Air glided into the trees, the wings sheared off and the back of the fuselage was broken. One blade of the propeller stuck in the ground, holding the engine up. It was 8:57 am on 15 July 1927. Smith and Bronte had flown for 25 hours and 43 minutes and were about 60 miles short of their goal.

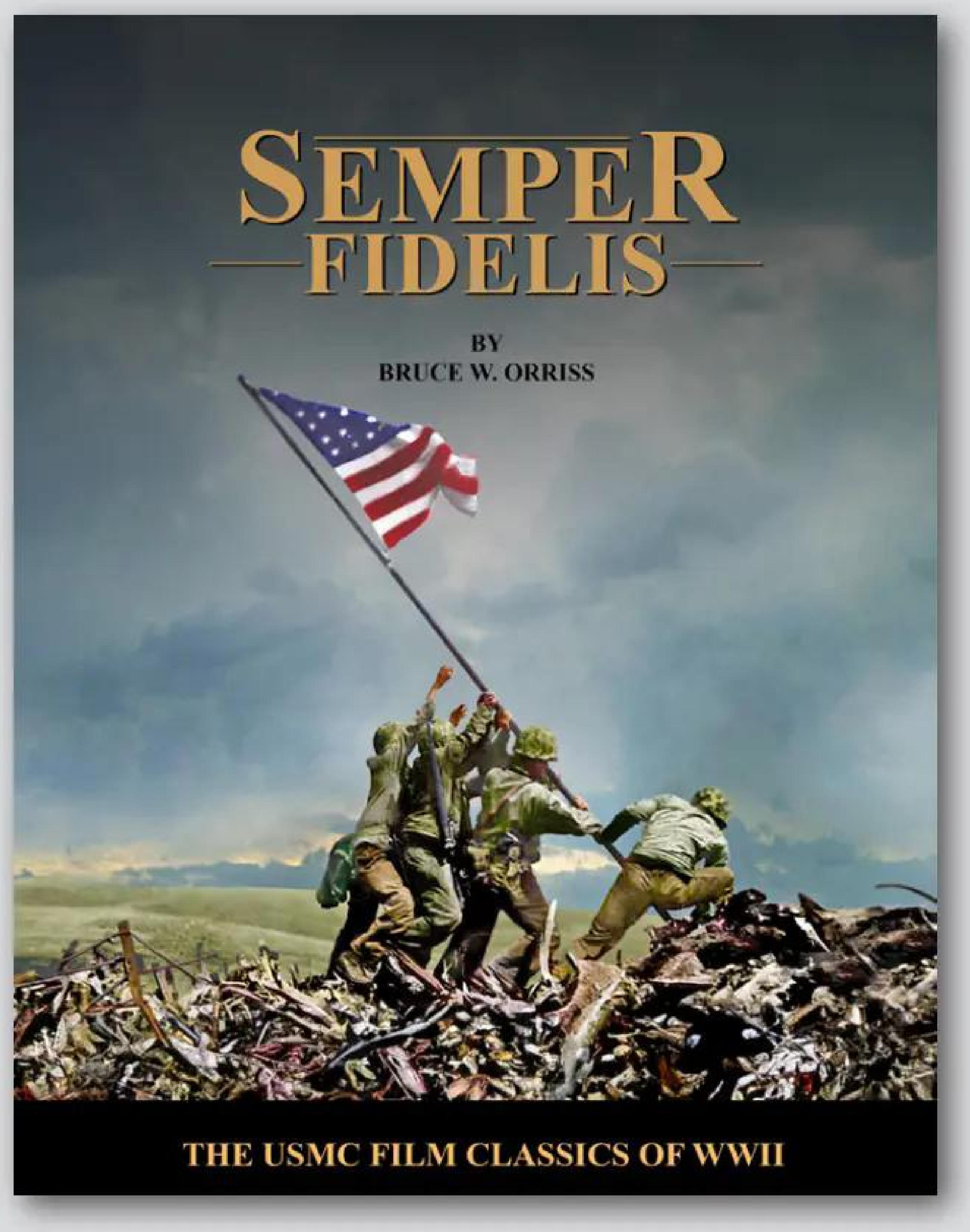
Except for a few scratches from tree thorns, the aviators were uninjured. Several farm field workers came over to the wreckage and then gave the pair a ride in their ancient flatbed farm truck to a near-by radio station building. Bronte observed that it must have been one of the roughest roads in the world, and Smith countered "doesn't that dust feel good in your eyes." Upon reaching the radio station building, the wireless operator there notified the Army in Honolulu about the location of the wreckage on Molokai. The Army dispatched a number of airplanes from Luke and Wheeler Fields to escort the fliers the short 60-miles from Homestead Field on Molokai (a pasture then) to Wheeler Field on Oahu. The 367 gallons held in the Travel Air should have been good for a projected 33 hours of flight so fuel consumption was a bit of a mystery that would have to be addressed with later flights.

Excitement in Honolulu was high as Smith and Bronte had arrived safely. Although they were not the first, they were the first civilians to fly from the mainland to the Hawaiian Islands. Their epic flight has largely been forgotten (at the time, it was eclipsed by the frenzy over what would be the disastrous Dole race), but the pair was a harbinger for trans-Pacific flight. Just eight years later, commercial airline service would connect Hawaii to the mainland.

Smith would go on to fly with Howard Hughes in the filming of the epic *Hell's Angeles*, then sought more permanent employment and went to work as a pilot with TWA. He finished his career as an executive with Trans World Airlines. Even though they were civilians, both men were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Bronte was given a commission as a lieutenant in the Navy Reserve. During WWII, Bronte went through the Navy's flight training program as a commander and went on to command three naval air stations. The Hawaiian Islands are now one of the top tourist destinations in the world, thanks in part to grit and determination of these men and their forgotten Pacific crossing flight. **AC**


WHEN HOLLYWOOD RULED THE SEAS
THE NAVAL FILM CLASSICS OF WORLD WAR II


TAKE the HIGH GROUND
BRUCE W. ORRISS
THE U.S. ARMY FILM CLASSICS OF WORLD WAR II


SEMPER FIDELIS
BY BRUCE W. ORRISS
THE USMC FILM CLASSICS OF WWII

GREAT MOVIES OF THE US NAVY, US ARMY, US MARINE CORPS!

THEY WERE EXPENDABLE
Robert MONTGOMERY
John WAYNE
SUBMARINE RAIDER
HOWARD · CHAPMAN
Das Boot
Cary GRANT
John GARFIELD
DESTINATION TOKIO

THE RED BALL EXPRESS
JEFF CHANDLER · ALEX NICOL · JUDITH BRAUN
THE BIG RED ONE
Die unbesiegbare Erste
THE TANKS ARE COMING
STEVE COCHRAN
A WALK IN THE SUN
DANA ANDREWS
RICHARD CONTE

Film historian Bruce Orriss has added three volumes on Hollywood films dedicated to the USN, USA, and USMC.

Filled with facts and photos, these books will serve as excellent companions to the author's earlier ground-breaking series on Hollywood movies devoted to aviation.

Well-printed and reasonably priced, this trio provides an excellent guide for the military enthusiast with lots of little-known information.

Richard Tregaskis' GUADALCANAL DIARY
FOSTER · NOLAN · BENDIX · CONTE · QUINN
AMERICA WILL NEVER FORGET WAKE ISLAND
BRIAN DONLEVY · MACDONALD CAREY · ROBERT PRESTON
PRIDE OF THE MARINES
CHARLES BICKFORD
SANDS OF IWO JIMA
JOHN WAYNE

BUY ALL THREE AND SAVE $10! • CALL 818-700-6868 FOR IMMEDIATE SERVICE

Challenge AVIATION BOOK CLUB

QUANTITY	TITLE NAME	PRICE EACH	TOTAL DUE
	WHEN HOLLYWOOD RULED THE SEAS	$30	
	TAKE THE HIGH GROUND	$30	
	SEMPER FIDELIS	$30	
	BUY ALL THREE AND SAVE $10	$80	
		MERCHANDISE TOTAL	
		CA Residents add 9% Sales Tax	
		TOTAL DUE (U.S. Funds Only)	

(Domestic Postage is included in the purchase price. Canadian and foreign orders please call 1-818-700-6868 or email *ed@challengeweb.com* for additional postage cost by title.)

Name ____________________

Address____________________

City____________ State ______ Zip + 4 ________

Telephone Number (in the event we need to contact you): ____________

E-mail address: ____________________

Payment Enclosed (Orders must be prepaid in U.S. funds)

○ Check ○ Money Order ○ Credit Card

Card # ____________________

Expiration Date ____________CVE#________

Signature____________________

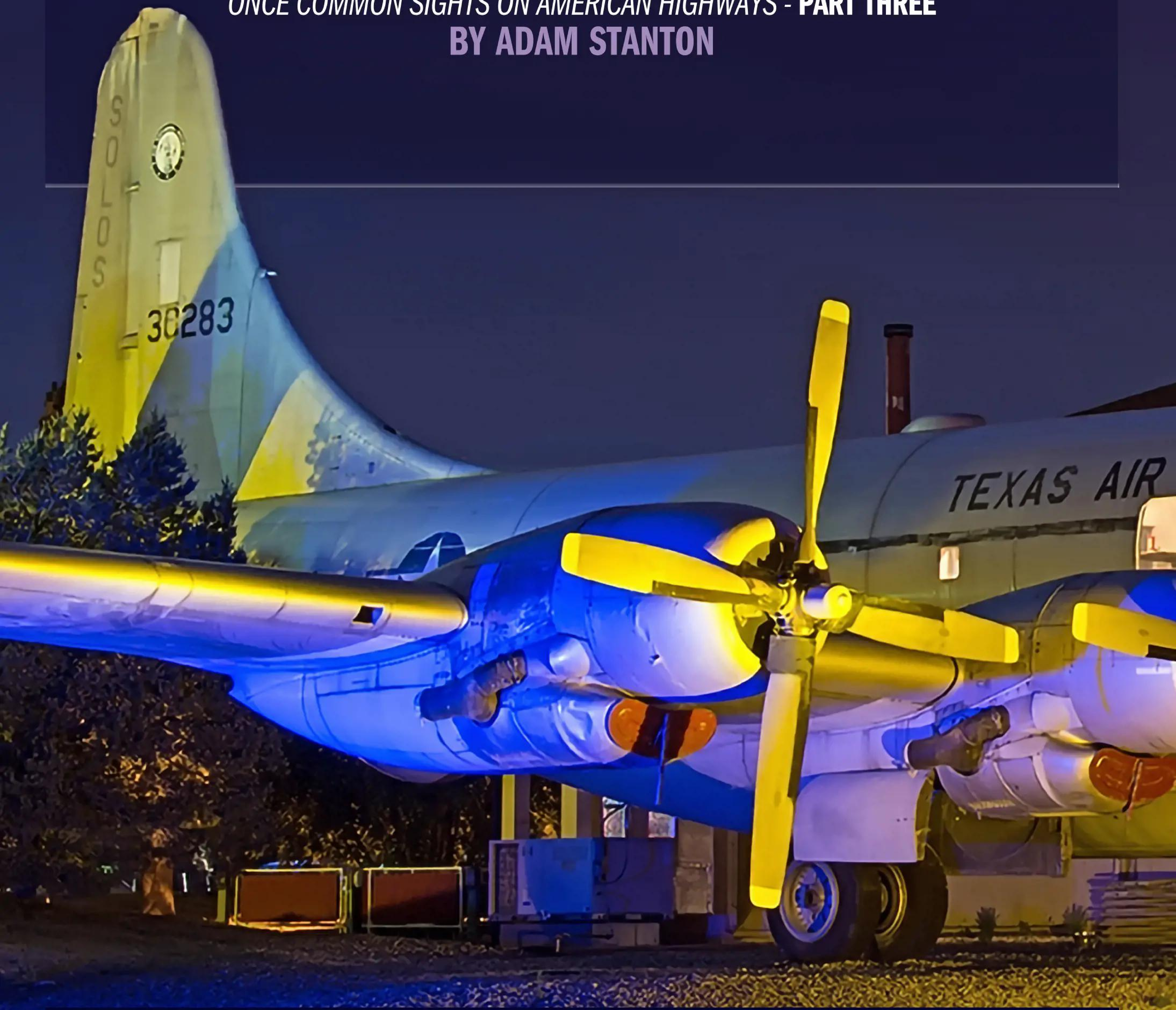
SEND TO:
CHALLENGE ABC
9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd.
#368
Chatsworth, CA 91311

OR, ORDER AT:
1-818-700-6868

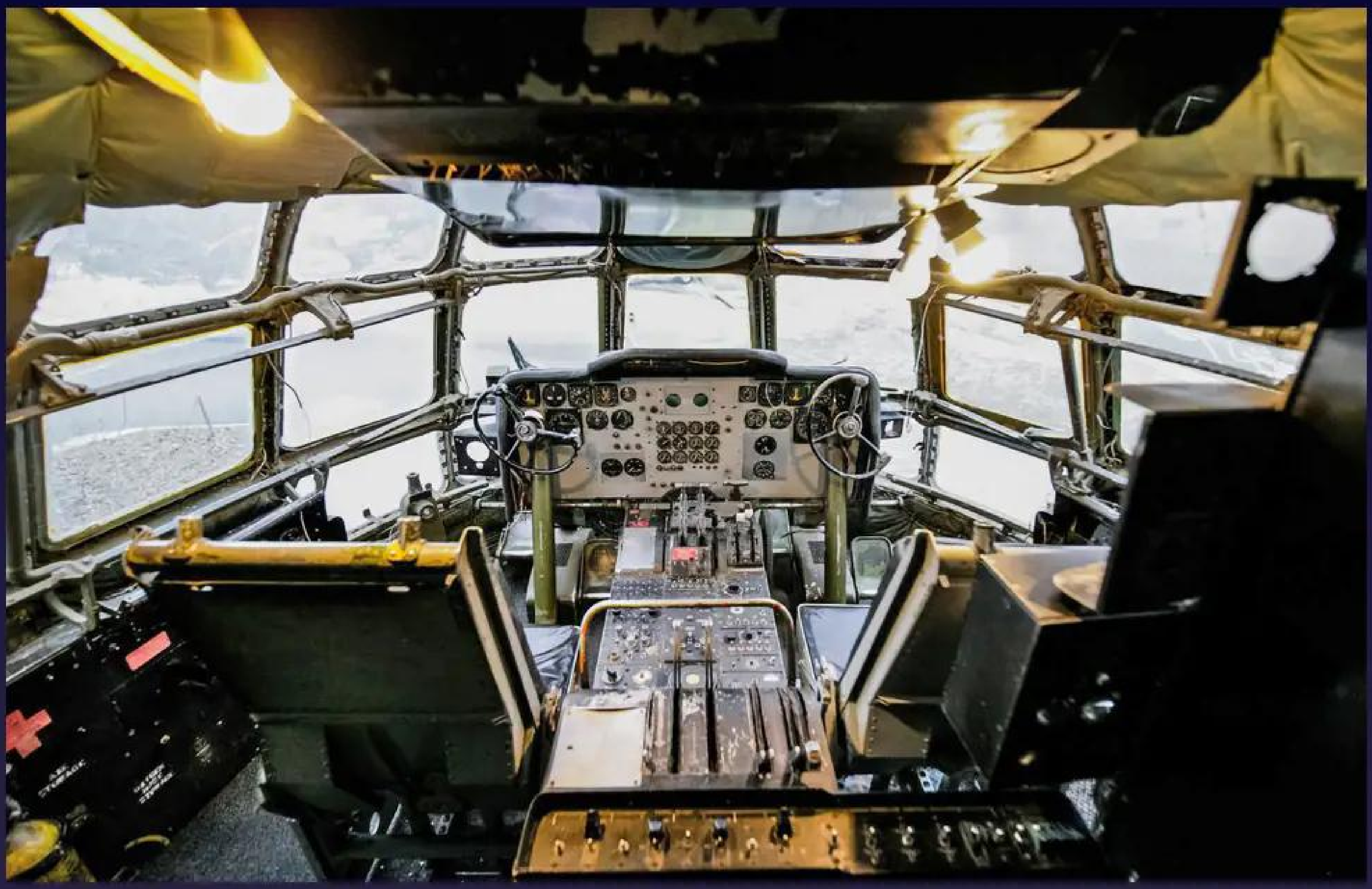
“FILL ‘ER UP!”

WE OFFER A FURTHER SELECTION OF AVIATION-THEMED ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS THAT WERE ONCE COMMON SIGHTS ON AMERICAN HIGHWAYS - **PART THREE**

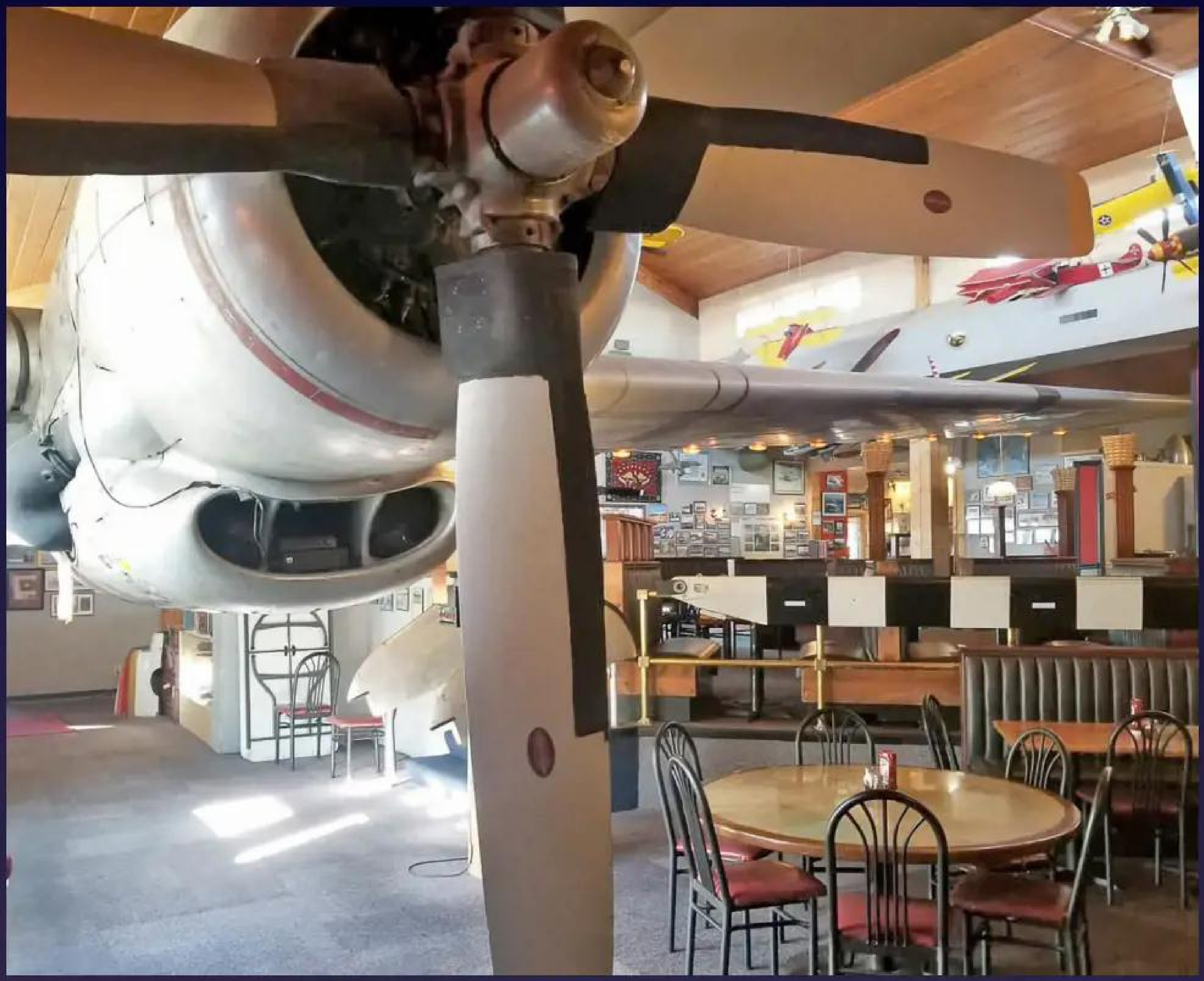
BY ADAM STANTON



Perhaps the most successful of aviation-themed “roadside attractions” is the Boeing KC-97L Stratotanker located next to Peterson Field in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The aircraft was last in service with the Texas Air National Guard (which was the last user of the mighty Boeing) and it opened as a restaurant in 2002 and has been quite successful with good ratings for food and service. The interior has been outfitted with comfortable seating while there is lots of aviation memorabilia on display. For the aviation enthusiast, “The Airplane Restaurant” (you could not get a more simple or direct name) is certainly a worthwhile stop.



The cockpit of the KC-97L has been preserved in its original condition. Built as USAF 53-283, when retired the aircraft became part of the Southwest Aerospace Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. Not surprisingly, this enterprise soon failed but rather than being scrapped, the Boeing was disassembled and transported by road to Peterson Field in Colorado Springs where it was converted into "The Airplane Restaurant."

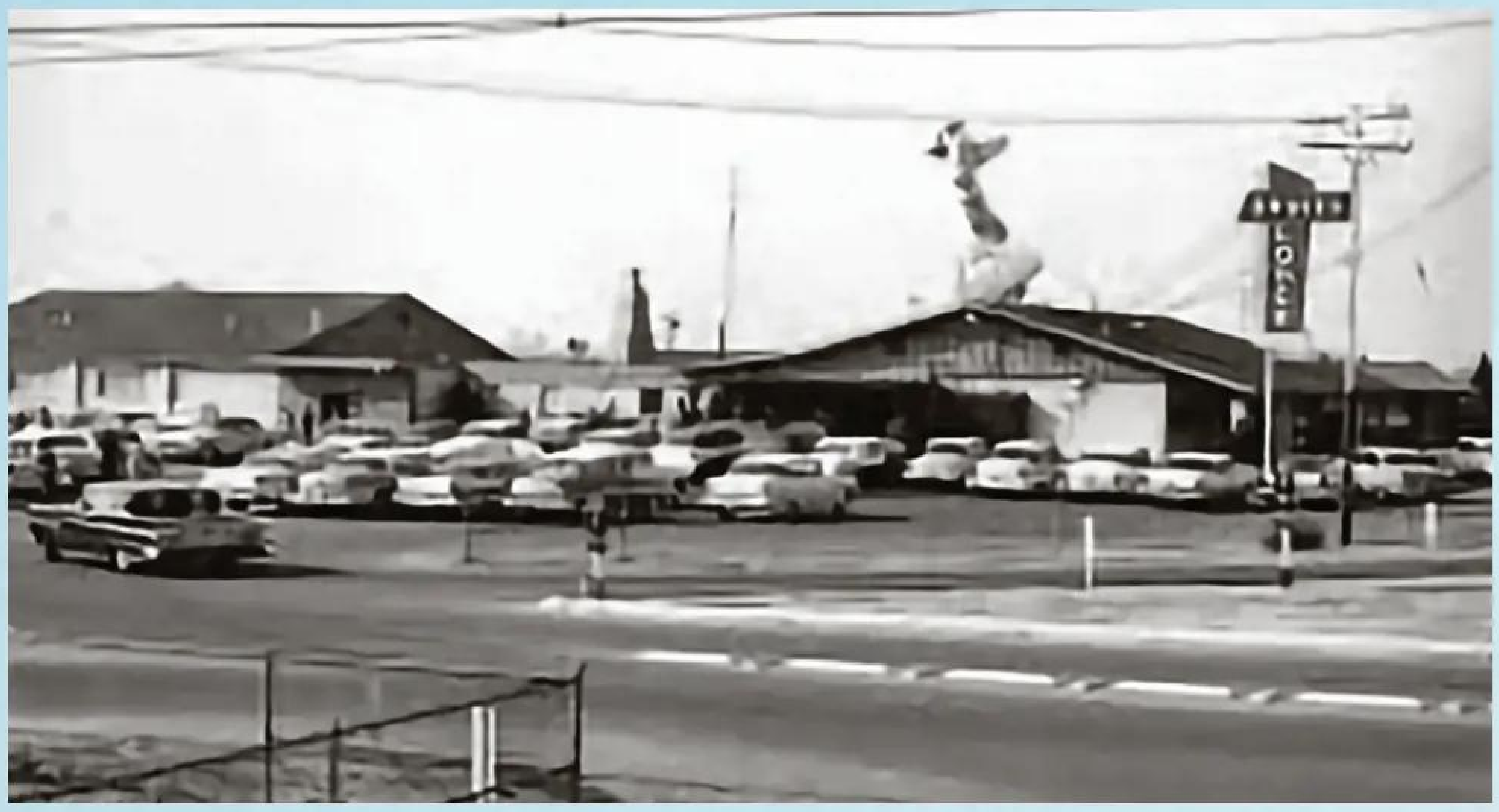


A building has been constructed around the left wing of the KC-97L to allow for more seating, aviation memorabilia, and a close-up view of the mighty Pratt & Whitney R-4360 engine.

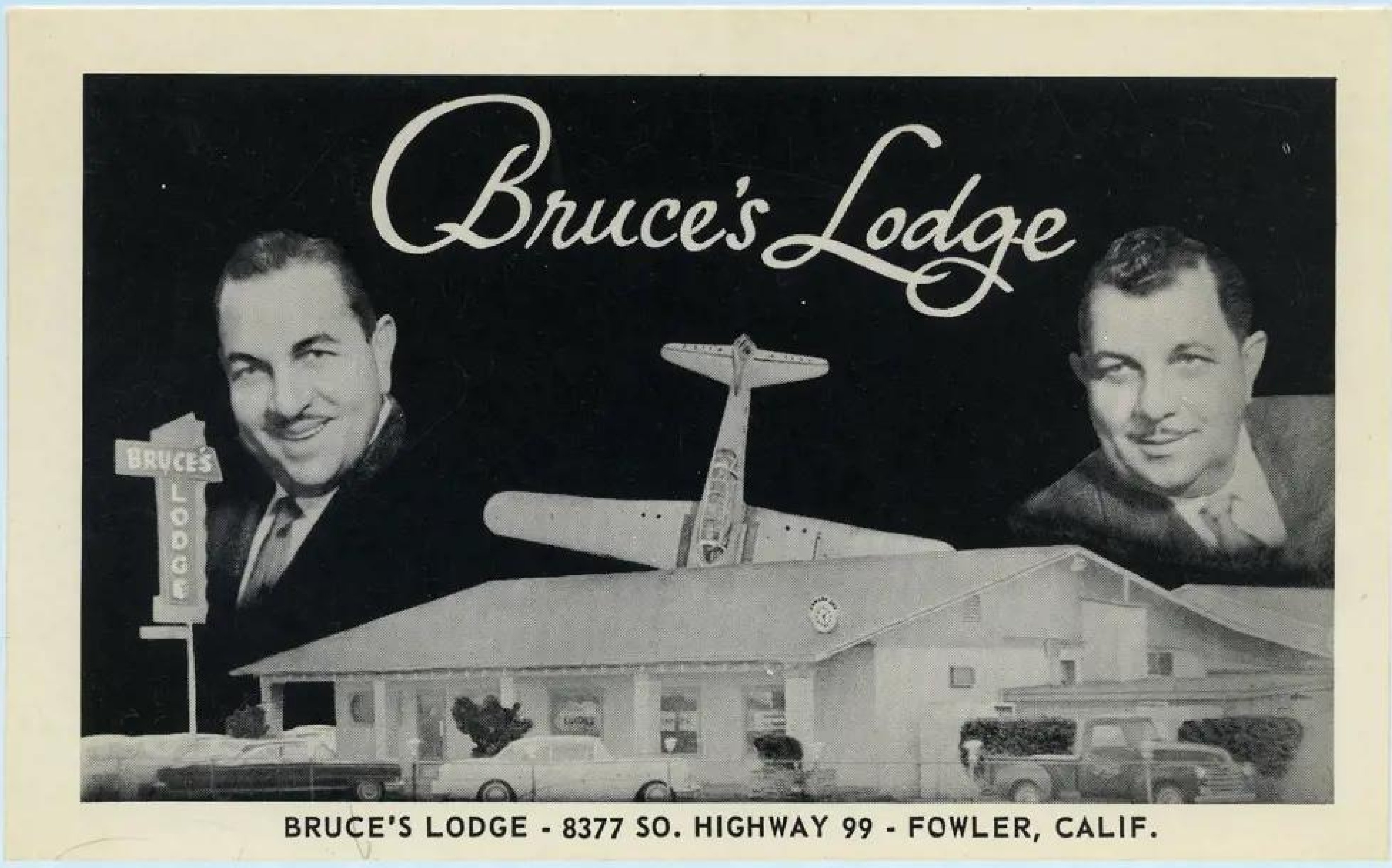
I was gladdened by the response from *Air Classics* readers to my two previous installments of "Fill 'Er Up!" The photos and information they supplied has led directly to this third installment of American aviation-themed roadside attractions. As noted in the previous two parts, these types of advertising were not exactly common but there were certainly numerous examples that dotted the nation's road system and a few still survive today.

These aircraft and the structures resembling aircraft or airships were eye-catching and I would imagine many a motorist pulled off the side of the road to snap a picture or to sample whatever was being sold. Times have changed and now all we basically have are corporate logos dotting the

GUA D
U.S. AIR FORCE
283
283



Bruce's Lodge was sort of a ramshackle affair but it was the only thing around and as can be seen in this 1950s' postcard, it attracted a lot of business. So perhaps the BT-13 really worked. Rocky recalled that over the years, some customers, perhaps in "their cups," climbed on the roof to get in the cockpit and relive wartime memories.



Bruce's Lodge caught ablaze in 1973 due to a grease fire and the inferno was intense. Multiple fire companies responded but Bruce's Lodge and the BT-13 turned into embers. Oddly, today collectables from Bruce's Lodge are quite popular with those that gather items from the golden age of American road travel. This is a postcard that shows the BT-13 along with Rocky and a pal ready to greet the next customer.

BRUCE'S LODGE
PHONE 4807
FOWLER, CALIF.
Bruce's Lodge
Fowler, Calif.
TEL. TEMPLE 4-9011

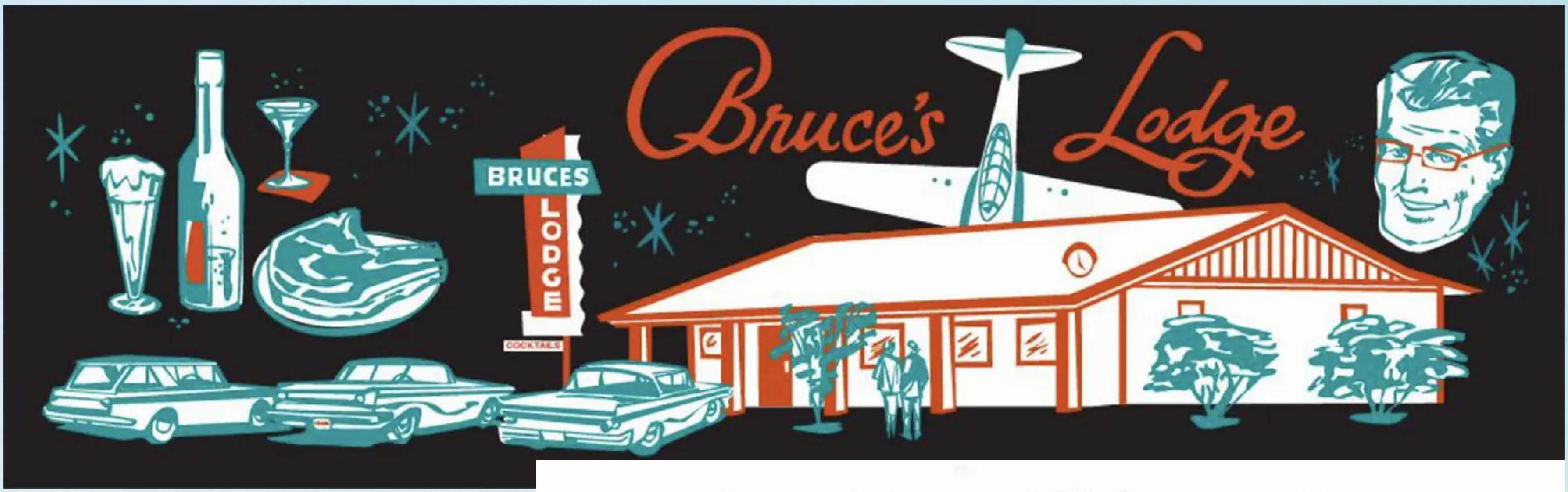
Collectors grab up things like these ash trays from Bruce's Lodge — back in the day when smoking was probably mandatory for visiting the establishment.

highways — whether it is for fuel or food. Gone are the imaginative displays that would so define American individual incentive when it came to marketing. All we have now are plastic signs for McDonald's, Taco Bell, Burger King, etc. Nothing comes close to these wonderful creations that enjoyed a few years of roadside popularity.

Fresno is located in California's vast central valley and that area was the site of numerous training bases. With the end of the war, the trainers were either flown to RFC sites for disposal or sold directly from the airfields from which they last operated. These aircraft, especially the BT-13s and Stearmans, were snapped up for the rapidly expanding agricultural aviation industry. The Stearmans were

BRUCES
LODGE
COCKTAILS

As noted previously, California's Highway 99 probably had more roadside attractions than any other stretch of American highway. For years, one of the most popular was a place called Bruce's Lodge that was located in the town of Fowler. Back in the 1950s, there were not of a hell of a lot of choices for dining when driving Highway 99 so Bruce's Lodge became extremely popular. *Air Classics* contributor Steve Wolff provided some salient details on the dining establishment that he found in an old copy of the *Fresno Bee* newspaper. An article in the 14 August 1972 edition stated, "Perhaps best known in this area of the aircraft stuck-in-roof landmarks is the WWII BT-13 in the roof of Bruce's Lodge… it was affixed to the restaurant in 1947, the year after it was built. It has become one of the most


Bruce's Lodge
BRUCES LODGE
COCKTAILS

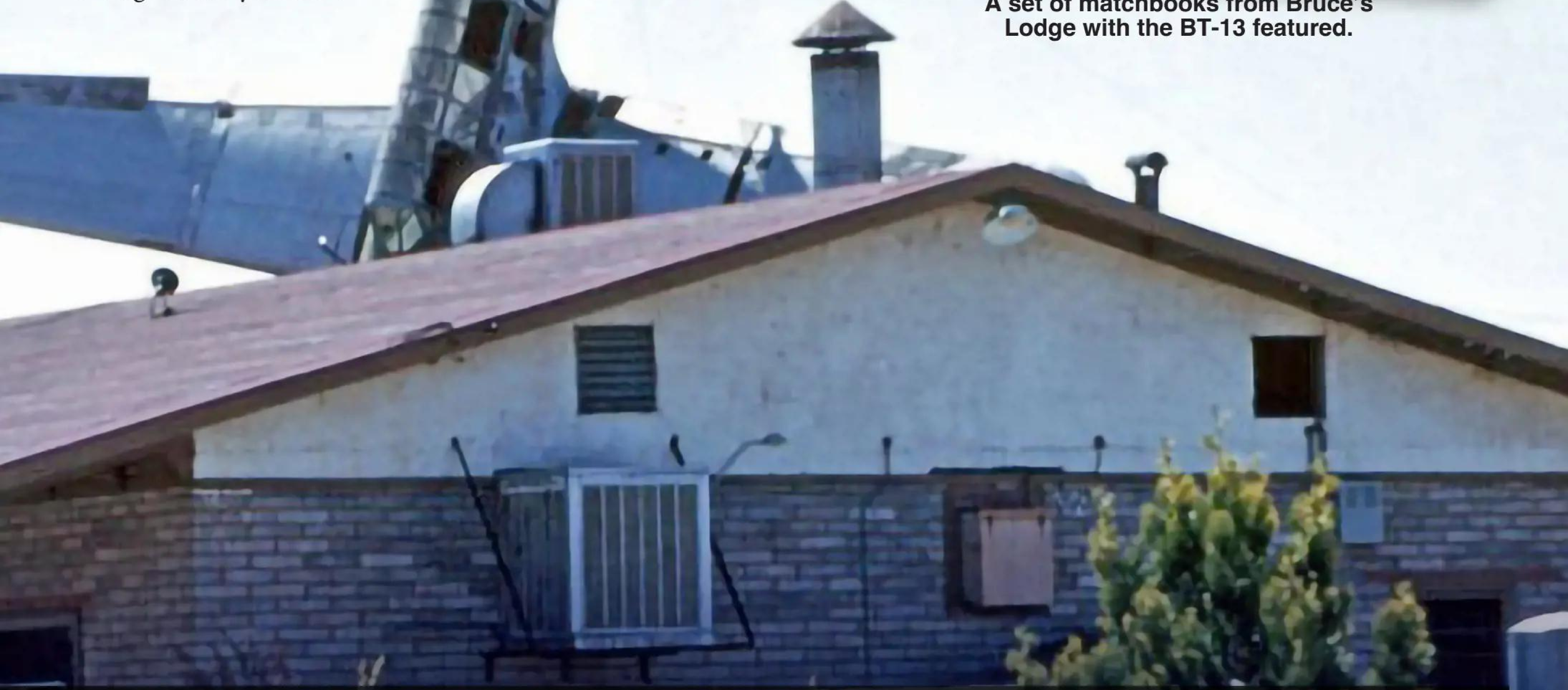
Another bit of advertising from Bruce's Lodge, this one from the 1960s.

converted to dusters and sprayers while the BTs supplied their R-985 engines, wheels and brakes, and a variety of other components to turn the Stearmans into effective and profitable ag aircraft. The stripped hulks of hundreds of BTs were pushed into the weeds at dozens of ag airfields and these were also a common sight. One reader sent in a snapshot taken in the early 1970s that shows dozens of BT-13 hulks in the weeds alongside Highway 99 at Tulare, California. These aircraft revolutionized the ag industry and the

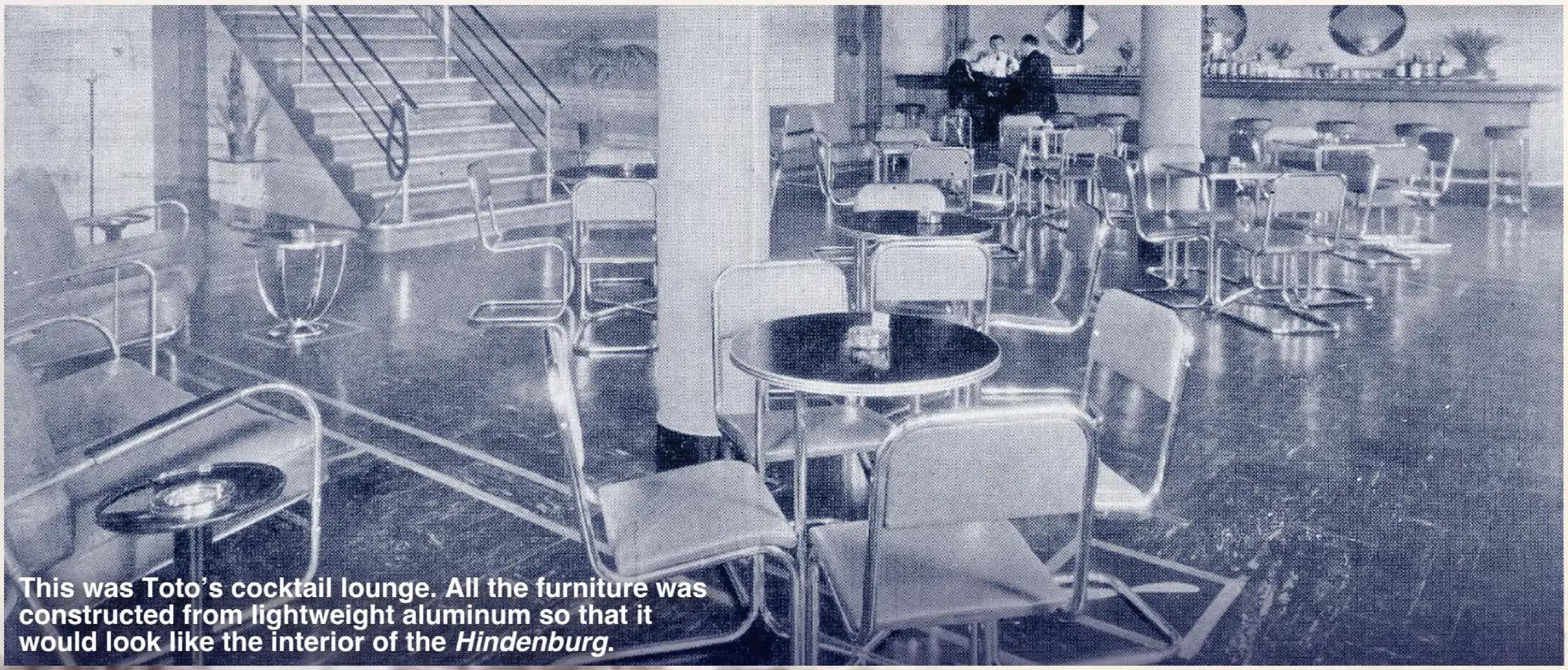
How about a set of cocktail glasses from Bruce's Lodge featuring the ill-fated BT-13?

BRUCE'S LODGE
99 HIGHWAY AND TEMPERANCE AVE
FOWLER, CALIF.
BROILED STEAKS
FRIED CHICKEN
SEA FOODS
COCKTAILS
FEATURING O'NEILL FED BEEF
R. J. BRUCE, prop.
BRUCE'S lodge
ON HWY 99 • FOWLER, CALIF.
BRUCE'S LODGE
BRUCE'S LODGE

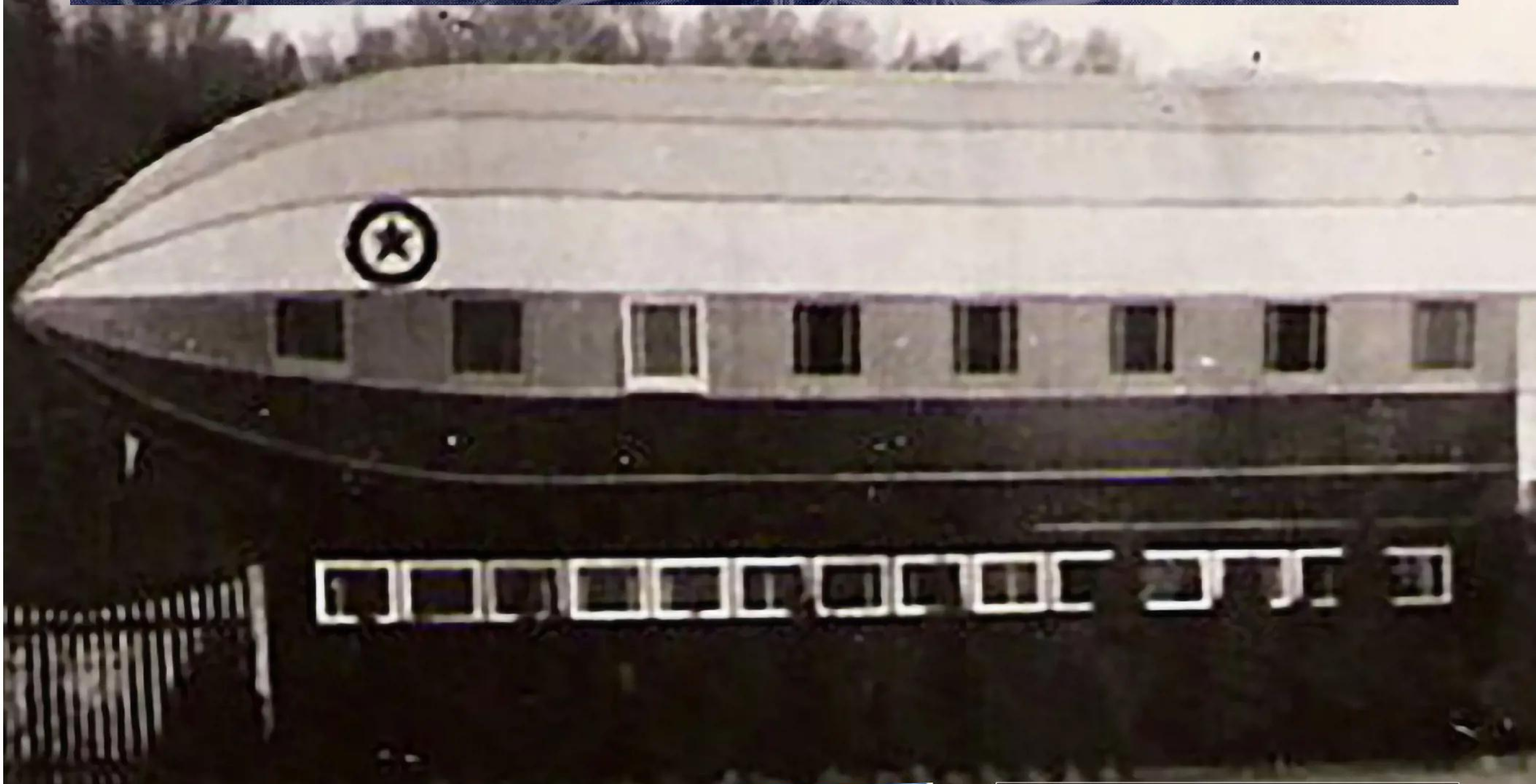
A set of matchbooks from Bruce's Lodge with the BT-13 featured.



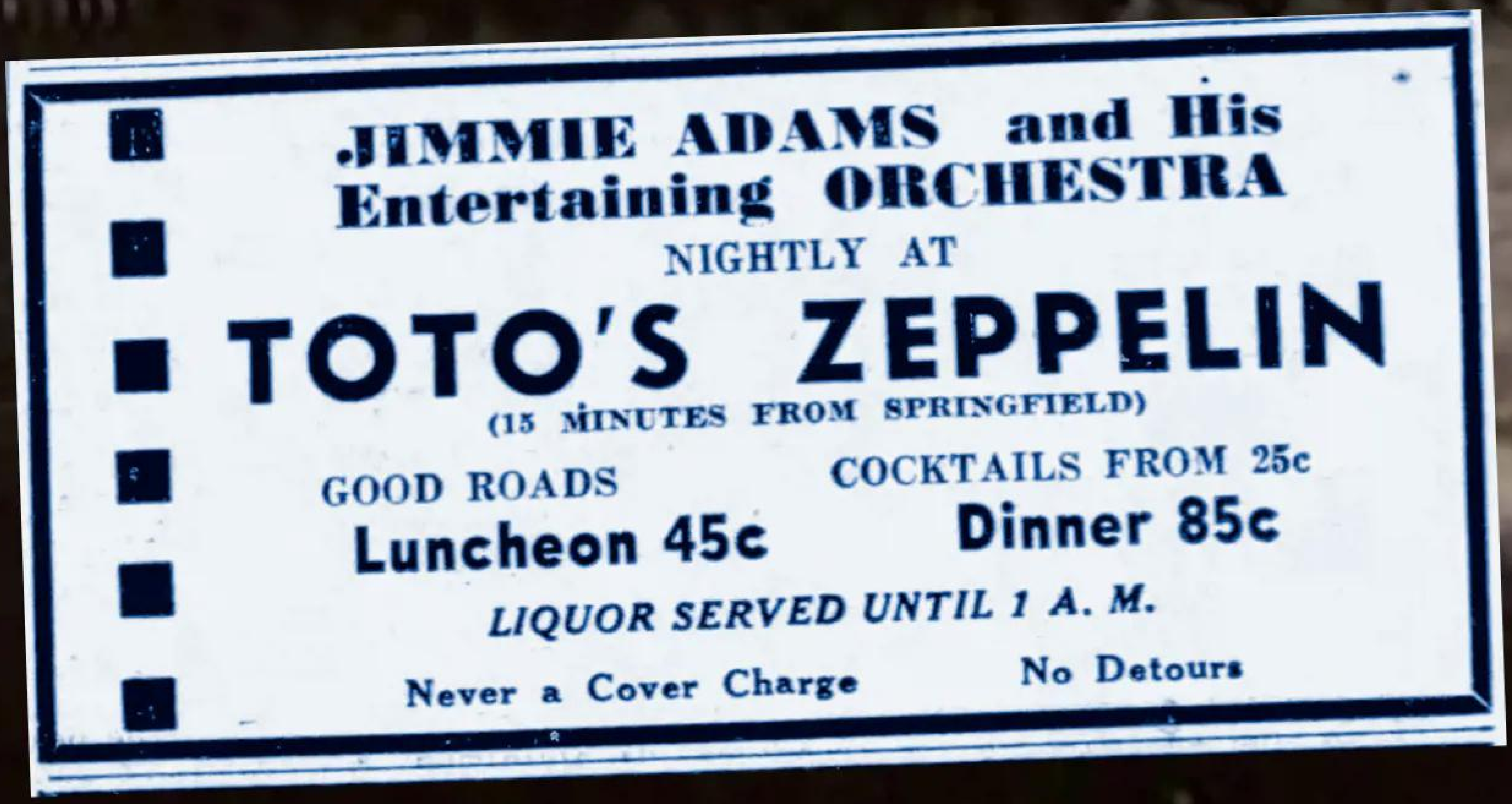
photographed objects between Los Angeles and San Francisco, pictures and articles of it appearing in no less than the *American Legion* magazine, the *New York Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Rocco "Rocky" Bruce, owner of the restaurant, recalls that he bought the aircraft from a Jack Campbell… who dabbled in war surplus, particularly aircraft and aircraft parts, following WWII. 'He flew the plane to Fresno from some base in Arizona where it had been used to train pilots during the war,' Bruce recalled. 'He sold the engine, stripped out parts and accessories he could sell, and offered the hulk to me for $300, saying it would make a good advertising gimmick for my parking lot. I told him I'd give him $350 for it if he'd put it on the roof.'"



This was Toto's cocktail lounge. All the furniture was constructed from lightweight aluminum so that it would look like the interior of the *Hindenburg*.



Imagine coming across this today during a highway drive. This fine establishment was Toto's Zeppelin Restaurant and Nightclub and it emulated the extreme interest in the giant airships of the 1920s and 1930s. The place called itself "New England's Most Unique Restaurant" and it was located on Route 5 between Northampton and Holyoke, Massachusetts in the "Historic Connecticut River Valley." The cigar-shaped structure was built to look sort of like an airship while the interior was constructed to appear as if it were on the *Hindenburg* (LZ-129).

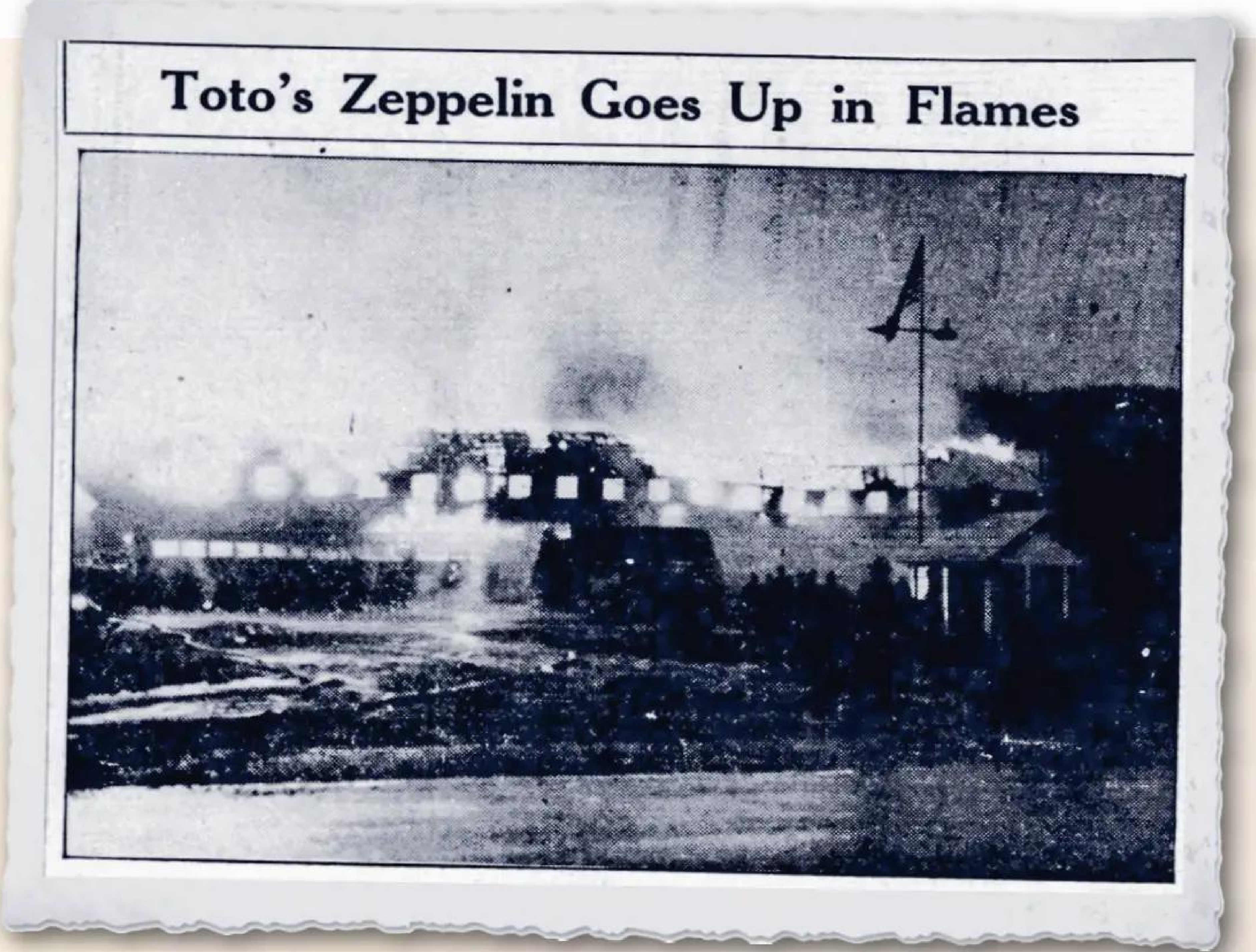


JIMMIE ADAMS and His
Entertaining ORCHESTRA
NIGHTLY AT
TOTO'S ZEPPELIN
(15 MINUTES FROM SPRINGFIELD)
GOOD ROADS
COCKTAILS FROM 25c
Luncheon 45c
Dinner 85c
LIQUOR SERVED UNTIL 1 A. M.
Never a Cover Charge
No Detours

You could have dinner at Toto's for 85 cents while enjoying Jimmie Adams and his "entertaining orchestra."

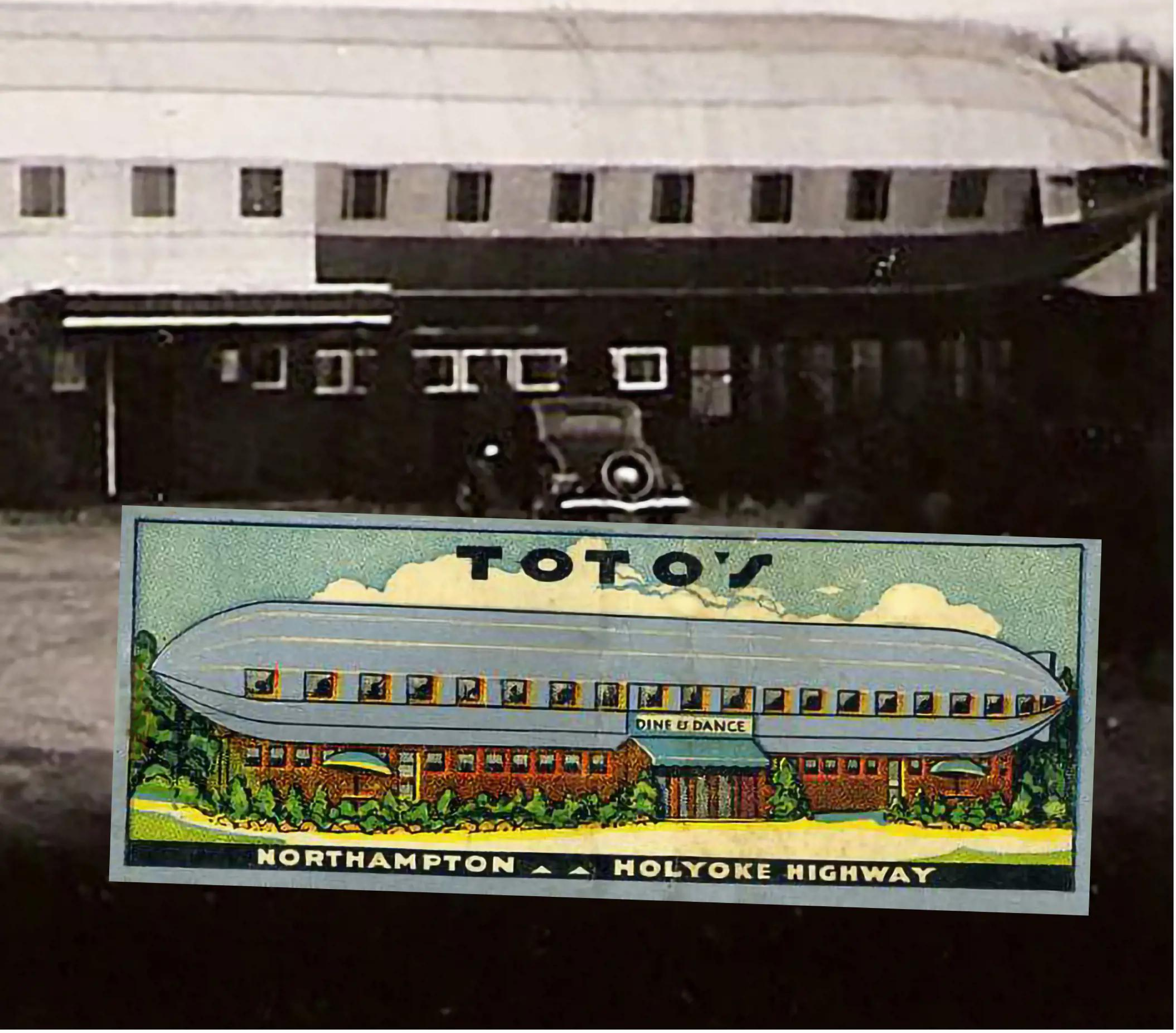
central valley soon became one of the world's largest agricultural producing areas. As can be seen, a few of the BTs survived to become roadside attractions and one still exists as perhaps the final WWII aircraft utilized for such purposes.

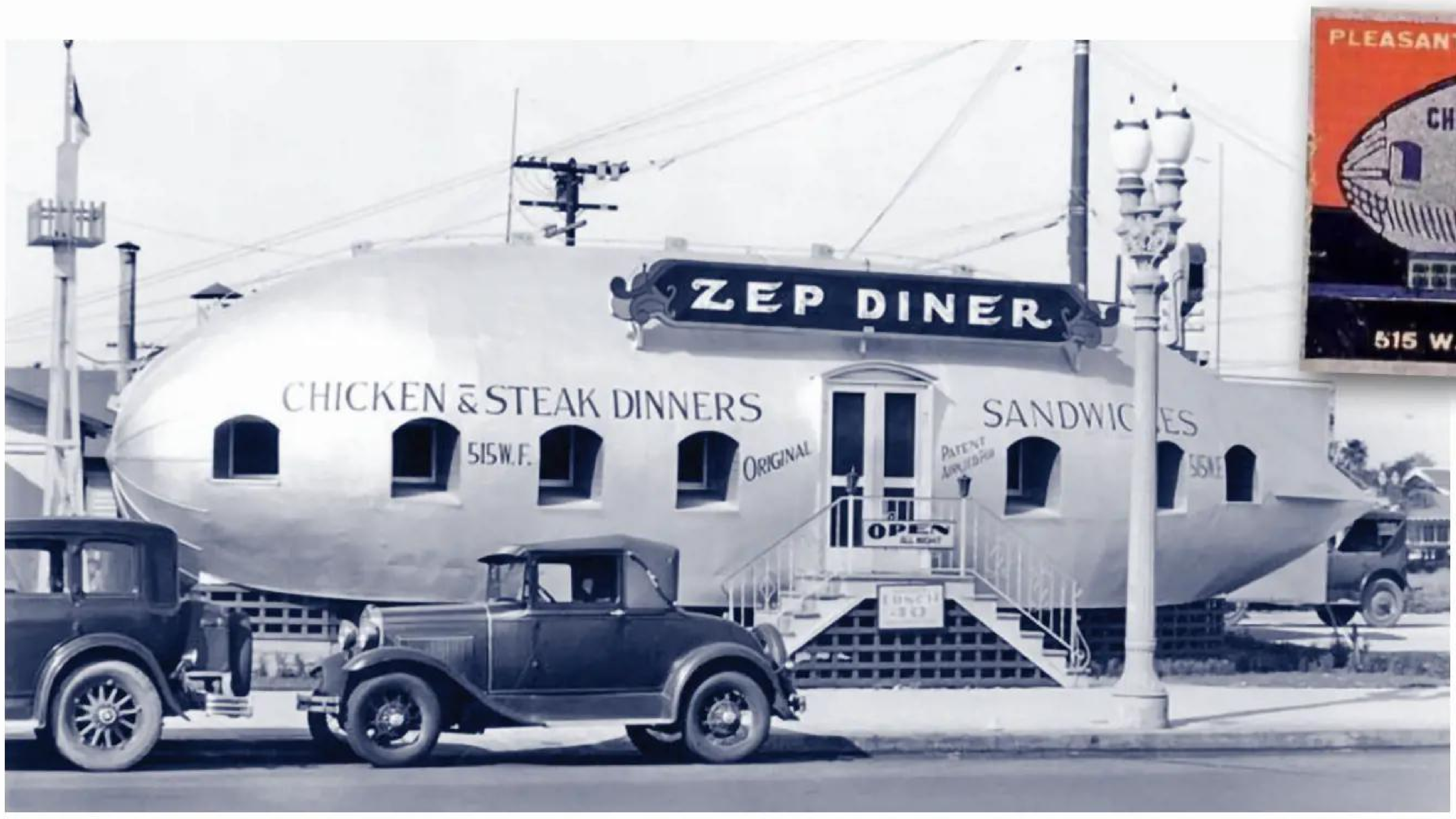
With the age of the giant airships of the 1920s, many businesses tried to capitalize on the popularity of the Zeppelins such as the *Hindenburg* and the Navy's flying aircraft carriers — the USS *Macon* and USS *Akron*. While finding a large airship to display was impossible, many businesses tried to emulate the shape of the airship to



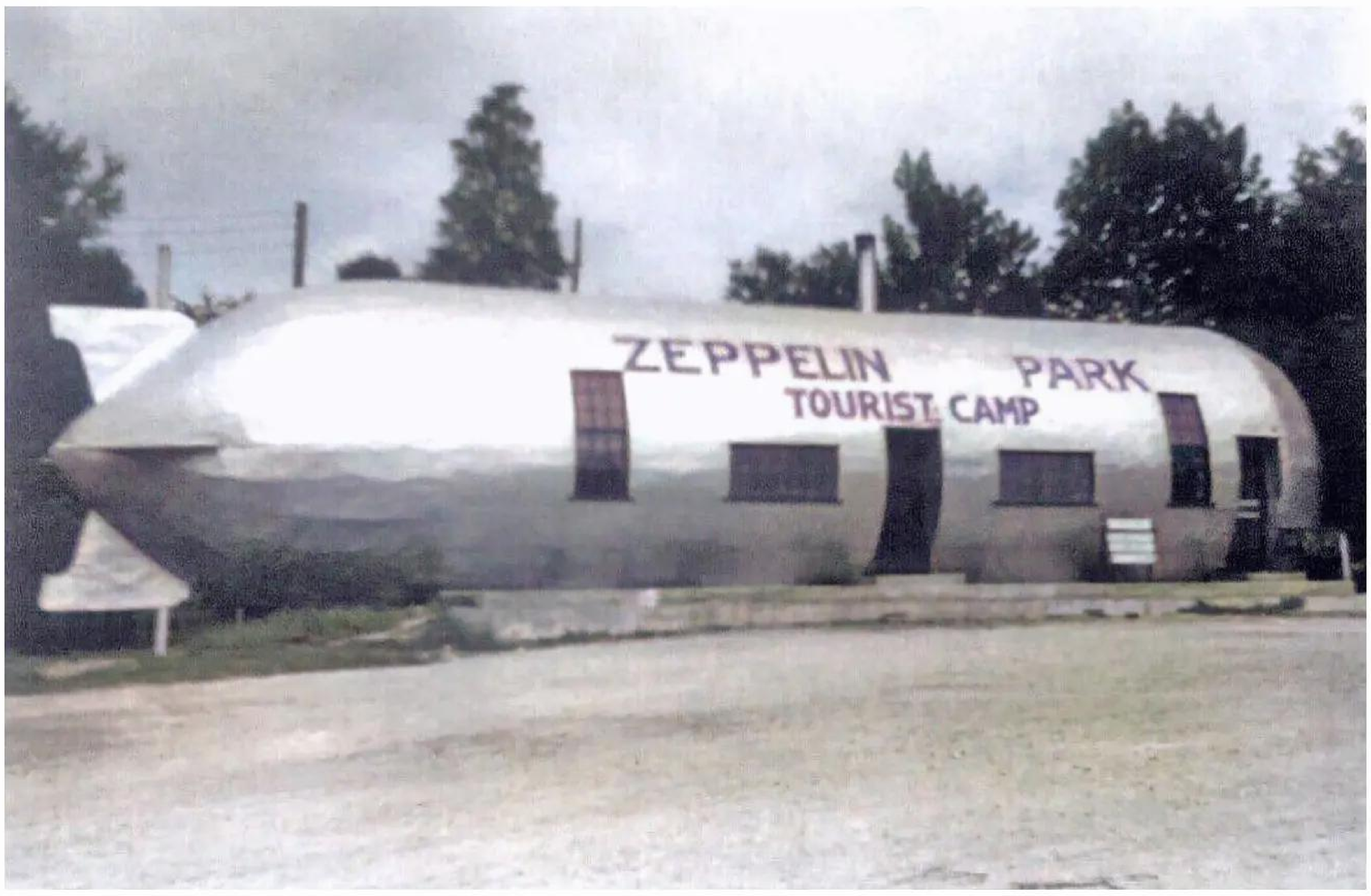
Toto's Zeppelin Goes Up in Flames

Toto's Zeppelin was owned by Salvatore LoBello and much like the original *Hindenburg*, the establishment went up in flames during 1938. A newspaper article noted that all the instruments of Jimmie Adams orchestra were "melted beyond recognition and were not insured." Not surprisingly, Toto's Zeppelin was not rebuilt.




ZEP DINER
CHICKEN & STEAK DINNERS
SANDWICHES
515 W.F.
ORIGINAL
OPEN

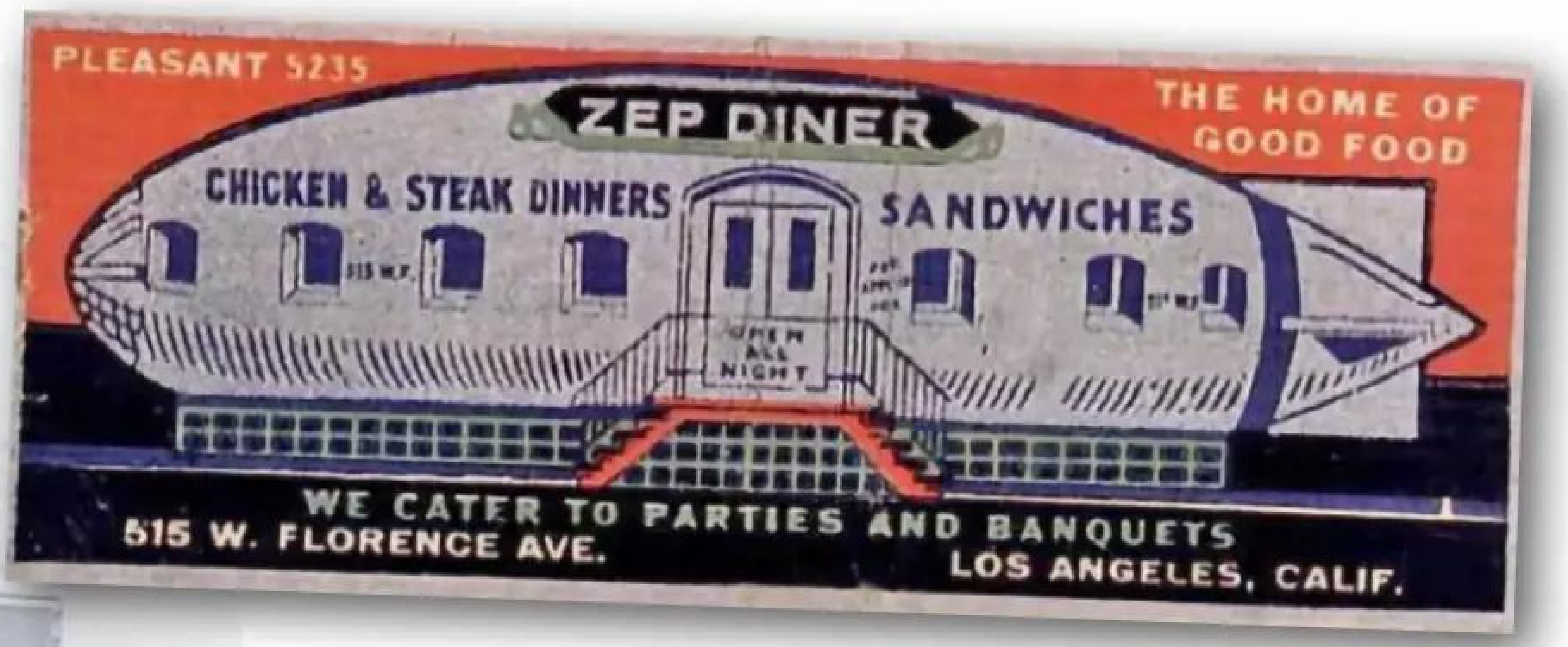
Not to be outdone by East Coast lighter-than-air establishments, Los Angeles had its own Zep Diner. Not as grand as Toto's Zeppelin, this small diner was located on Florence Avenue, was open "all night," and was the home of the tasty "Hinden Burger" along with chicken and steak dinners. To show how times have changed, the Zep Diner is now a parking lot for a McDonald's. The Zep Diner did perfectly capture the brief craze for the huge airships.


ZEPPELIN PARK
TOURIST CAMP

This structure was in Jennerstown, Pennsylvania, and is apparently the rather ominous looking office for the Zeppelin Park Tourist Camp. One can only imagine.

ZEP DINER
CHICKEN & STEAK DINNERS
515 W.F.
OPEN
LMORE

Two local lovelies preparing to enter Zep Diner. Just barely seen to the right is a large neon sign in the shape of a Zeppelin that proclaims "Always Open."

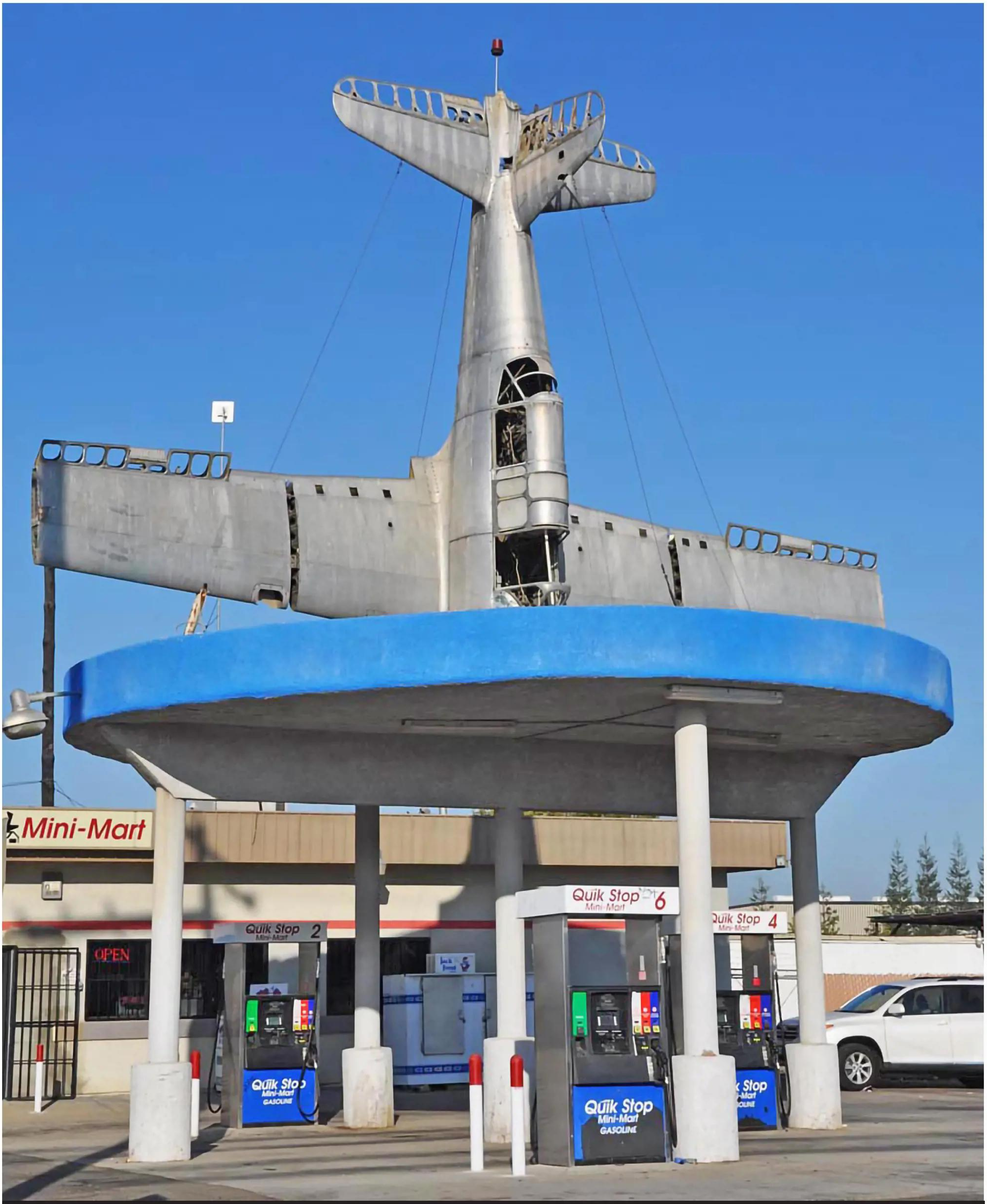

PLEASANT 5235
ZEP DINER
THE HOME OF GOOD FOOD
CHICKEN & STEAK DINNERS
SANDWICHES
OPEN ALL NIGHT
WE CATER TO PARTIES AND BANQUETS
515 W. FLORENCE AVE.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

Matchbook cover for the Zep Diner.

attract customers. The effectiveness of their efforts varied but, once again, this was an interesting if brief attempt at aviation-themed roadside attractions. The airship motif went from the office at a seedy tourist camp, to a spiffy little diner in Los Angeles, to the rather splendid Toto's Zeppelin. Personally, I would not have minded visiting Toto's and sitting at the Zeppelin-inspired cocktail lounge!

Because of the *Air Classics* articles, I was contacted by a gentleman who has purchased the hulk of a Boeing 747 at Mojave Airport. We spent a pleasant half-hour discussing his plans for what he called his "Jumbo Jet." His idea is to move the aircraft to a lot he owns off the highway from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. He had made some initial drawings showing the 747 mounted in a flight attitude on a set of pylons with an escalator-type device that would take customers from the parking lot into the aircraft where there would be considerable seating with the interior designed in an "aviation theme." The exterior of the aircraft would be trimmed in neon and would be so bright "that you could see it from ten miles" he enthusiastically explained. His plans called for an enormous neon sign that would proclaim "Jumbo's Jumbo Burgers." Perhaps this vision is a little more expansive than sticking a BT-13 or a Bamboo Bomber atop a building and hoping for customers, but it all part of this rather strange and wonderful American experience of utilizing aircraft for roadside attractions.

I am sure there are more of these creations that we have not yet covered. Who knows? Perhaps on some now forgotten stretch of road, there sits another abandoned aircraft that once beckoned customers driving by in a now distant time. Please let us know if you have other "aviation roadside attractions" we can share with readers. **AC**



This is perhaps the only surviving World War Two aircraft still serving as a roadside attraction. The rather battered BT-13 is located in Caruthers, California, and is perched atop a gas station. Once again, we have to refer to the *Fresno Bee* article provided by Steve Wolff: "Who sold that aircraft to the service station owner? Well, it was a man named Jack Campbell, a former Fresno and Caruthers resident who… well, the same one who sold a BT-13 to Bruce's Lodge, only instead of getting $350 he sold it to the service station man for $50. And one gets what one pays for, the angle of the service station aircraft having no class at all." There is another version of the story, also printed in a later *Fresno Bee*, that states "local crop duster pilot Doug Gandy flew the plane to town from Blackfoot, Idaho. After salvaging the engine, wheels, and instruments, he sold the plane to the proprietor for $75. The plane was mounted on the circular rooftop in the late 1950s and survived a fire in 1985." Well, whatever story is true at least this BT-13 still survives compared to the one at Bruce's Lodge. The gas station is well worth a visit for any WWII aviation buff because even though this Valiant has survived eight decades, who knows what is in the future?

BATTLE OVER
HUNGARY

MESSERSCHMITTS OF THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN AIR FORCE'S ELITE PUMA SQUADRON TACKLE THE LIGHTNINGS OF THE 82nd FIGHTER GROUP

BY STEVE BLAKE

First Lieutenant László Dániel, the 101/3 Puma Squadron's Technical Officer, with one of his unit's Bf 109G-6s at Veszprém in the summer of 1944. Dániel was credited with shooting down ten Allied aircraft, including two USAAF P-38s (one of which was a shared victory) and two B-24s (both also shared).

By 7 July 1944, the USAAF's strategic 15th Air Force (AF) in Italy had been operational for just over eight months and had reached its peak strength, which included 21 groups of four-engine Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers and seven groups of long-range escort fighters, equipped with Lockheed P-38 Lightnings and North American P-51 Mustangs.

The Allies invaded southern Italy in early September 1943, and by the end of that year had captured most of its peninsula south of Rome. Many Axis airfields were captured and new ones were built for use by the Allied air forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO). They placed the USAAF's long-range bombers and fighters that were now based there within range of enemy targets throughout southern and eastern Europe — from France to Greece and as far north as Poland.

The 15th AF's primary targets on 7 July were the synthetic oil refineries at Blechhammer and Odertal, in Silesia (now part of Poland). Its P-38-equipped 82nd Fighter Group (FG) was tasked with withdrawal support for the Liberators of the 55th and 304th Bombardment Wings that attacked those targets. They were to rendezvous with the bombers near Bánovce in Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia), 80 miles south of Blechhammer, as they headed for home after the bombing.

This was the 82nd FG's 723rd combat mission. Its first had been on 25 December 1942, with the 12th AF, shortly after it arrived in Algeria from Northern Ireland, where it had been training for the previous several months. Since January 1944, it had been based at Vincenzo Airfield (Foggia #11 — one of the vast number of airfields in and around Foggia), southeast of the city of Foggia and a few miles from the Adriatic Sea. The 82nd had by then been the top-scoring USAAF fighter group in the MTO for well over a year.

By 0905 hours, 38 Lightnings had taken off from Vincenzo and were forming up over the Adriatic — 15 from the lead 95th Fighter Squadron (FS), 13 from the 96th, and ten from the 97th. Leading the Group was the 95th's 1st Lt. Joseph F. Belton. (In the MTO,

Insignia of the 82nd Fighter Group.

due to the USAAF's slow promotion rate there, it wasn't that unusual for a lieutenant to be leading a whole fighter group on a mission!). Their route took them north up the Adriatic, across what was then northern Yugoslavia, then over Hungary and across the Danube River into Czechoslovakia — nearly 500 miles and a little over two hours from Foggia.

They never actually rendezvoused with the Liberators, however, as when they arrived in the Bánovce area at 1125 and began circling at 23,000 feet, their assigned bomber units were nowhere in sight, nor could they be contacted by radio. After 20 minutes, the Group proceeded back south, into northern Hungary, and soon overtook another B-24 formation being escorted by P-51s. At 1150, its pilots spotted some Bf 109s below them 70 miles north of the huge Lake Balaton. The second section (two flights) of the 96th Squadron targeted four of the Messerschmitts, but it was in turn bounced by a half dozen more. The Squadron's first section then joined in, and the ensuing actions resulted in two of the enemy fighters being claimed destroyed — one by 1st Lt. Merrill M. Adelson (his third victory) and the other by 1st Lt. Walter J. Carroll, the leader of the 96th's fourth flight (his fourth victory). The only damage to any of these P-38s was some bullet holes in the left wing and outboard flap of Lt. Carroll's plane.

The 95th Squadron soon also entered the fray, its second section pursuing two more Bf 109s that were diving away from some Mustangs. They too were then attacked by a half-dozen Messerschmitts, whereupon the 95th's first section waded in. That squadron's pilots claimed three more 109s destroyed — one each by Lt. Belton (his third victory); 1st Lt. Jack D. Joley, its second flight's leader (*his* third victory); and 2nd Lt. James C. Hardin. Jim Hardin was not one of the Squadron's veterans; he had joined it just eleven days before, on 26 June. It was later determined that Joe Belton's was the 82nd FG's 500th confirmed aerial victory — it had raised its score to 548 by VE Day (along with 88 probables and 227 damaged).

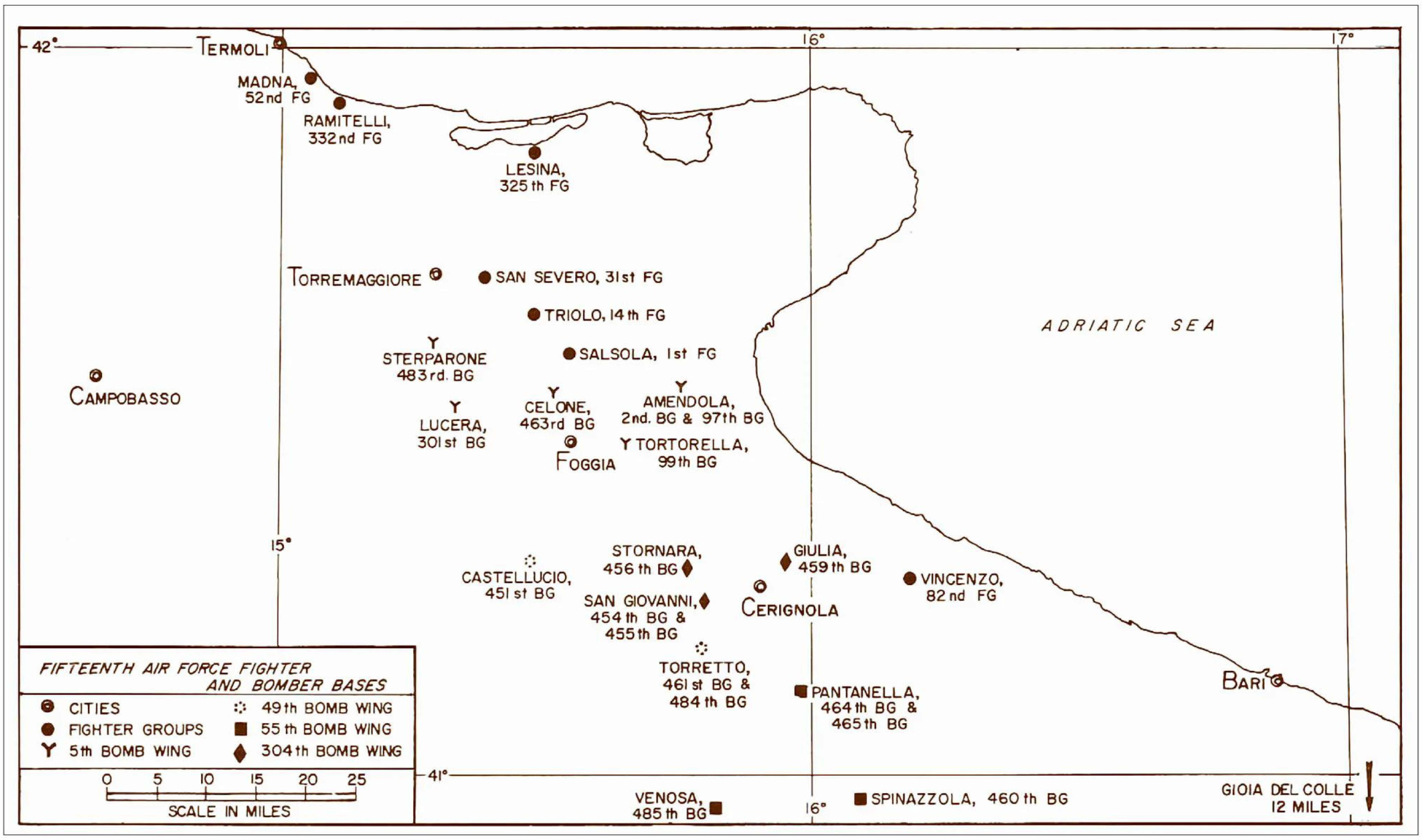
The 15th AF's fighter pilots claimed to have shot down a total of 13 "Me"

PLANES DESTROYED
IN COMBAT 502
ON GROUND 135
TOTAL 637
SHIPS 9
LOCOMOTIVES 102
KRAUT XTERMI RS IN

82nd FG CO Col. William P. Litton (second from the left) shakes hands with 95th FS pilot Lt. Joseph Belton in front of the Group's scoreboard that also displayed its three squadrons' colorful insignias. The other men are Lt. Merrill Adelson (to his right) and Lt. Walt Carroll. Adelson, Belton, and Carroll were each credited with shooting down a Bf 109 over Hungary on 7 July 1944. Joe Belton led the whole Group on that mission, as a first lieutenant! During a particularly successful bomber escort to Vienna, Austria, the following day, Lt. Carroll destroyed three twin-engine Me 410 (probably Me 210s) fighters and Adelson one. After completing his combat tour and returning to the States, Carroll was assigned to the 443rd Combat Crew Training Squadron at Ontario, California, as a P-38 instructor pilot. Tragically, he was killed in a crash near there on 20 January 1945.

PLANES DESTROYED
IN COMBAT 502
ON GROUND 135
TOTAL 637
SHIPS 9
LOCOMOTIVES 102
RAUT XTERMINATOR

Colonel Litton and Lt. Belton pose together for another photograph on the same occasion as in the previous photo. The victories the Group's pilots scored on the 7 and 8 July missions had been added to the scoreboard.


42°
TERMOLI
16°
17°
MADNA, 52nd FG
RAMITELLI, 332nd FG
LESINA, 325th FG
TORREMAGGIORE
SAN SEVERO, 31st FG
TRIOLO, 14th FG
ADRIATIC SEA
STERPARONE 483rd. BG
SALSOLA, 1st FG
CAMPOBASSO
LUCERA, 301st BG
CELONE, 463rd BG
AMENDOLA, 2nd. BG & 97th BG
FOGGIA
TORTORELLA, 99th BG
15°
CASTELLUCIO, 451st BG
STORNARA, 456th BG
GIULIA, 459th BG
VINCENZO, 82nd FG
SAN GIOVANNI, 454th BG & 455th BG
CERIGNOLA
TORRETTO, 461st BG & 484th BG
PANTANELLA, 464th BG & 465th BG
BARI
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE FIGHTER AND BOMBER BASES
CITIES
FIGHTER GROUPS
5th BOMB WING
49th BOMB WING
55th BOMB WING
304th BOMB WING
0 5 10 15 20 25
SCALE IN MILES
41°
VENOSA, 485th BG
16°
SPINAZZOLA, 460th BG
GIOIA DEL COLLE 12 MILES

The huge concentration of 15th AF airfields around Foggia, Italy during WWII.

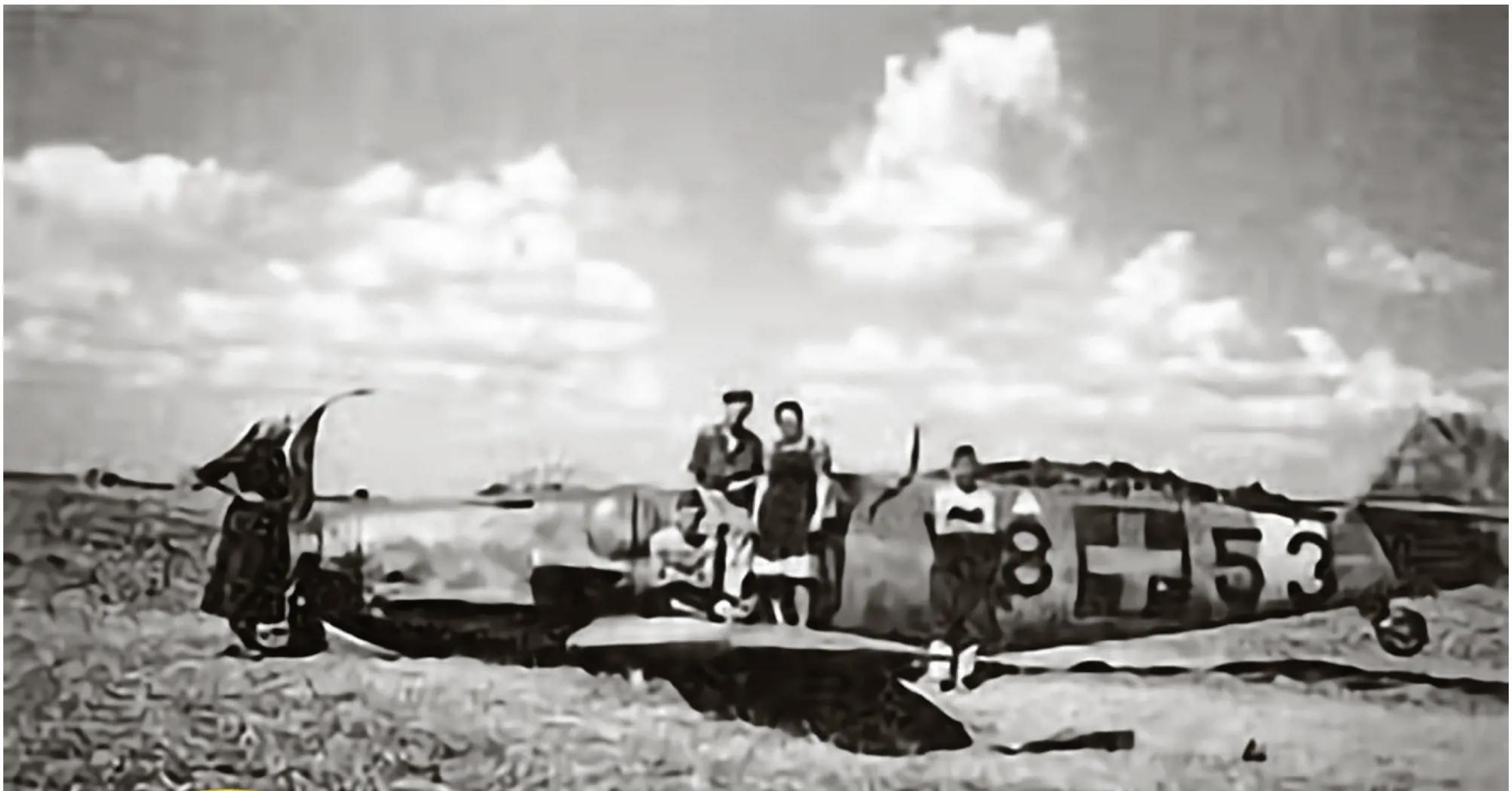
109s that day (plus one Fw 190) — seven with P-38s, the 82nd FG's five and two by the 1st FG (the latter's being scored near Veszprém, Hungary), plus six with P-51s, two of them near Győr, Hungary. Eight *Luftwaffe* Bf 109s and a single Messerschmitt of the Royal Hungarian Air Force are known to have been lost.

Only one Lightning (P-38J-15-LO 44-23189) was lost in these actions. Its pilot was 2nd Lt. Charles C. Walker, the wingman of the 95th's fourth flight leader, 1st Lt. Roy I. Harman. He was also a rookie, having been assigned to the Squadron on 27 June. One 95th Lightning received some damage — that flown by 2nd Lt. Lester J. Henry (who had joined the Squadron the same day as Lt. Hardin), which was struck by a bullet in its left wheel well. The 97th

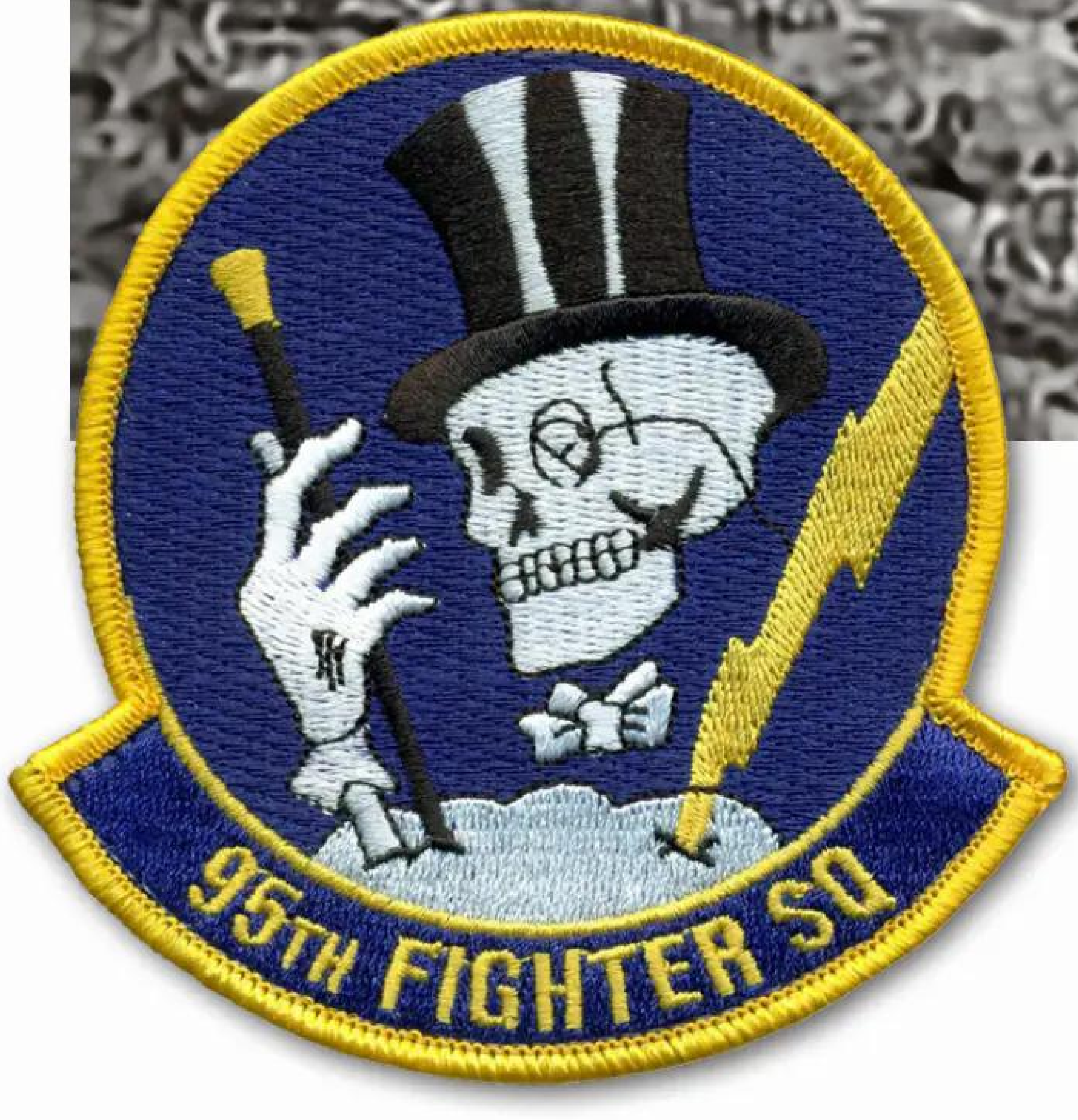
IN COMBAT 550
ON GROUND 176
TOTAL 726
SHIPS 9
LOCOMOTIVES 126
KRAUT EXTERMINATORS INC.

A color photo of the 82nd Fighter Group scoreboard, taken around 1 August 1944.

The 96th Fighter Squadron's BP (the serial number on its vertical tail having evidently been intentionally obscured and now unfortunately unknown) dropping two 100-pound bombs, flown by Lt. Walt Carroll. Note the five swastika victory symbols. It isn't known for certain whether Carroll flew it on the 7 July mission. "B" was the 96th Squadron indicator and "P" that aircraft within the Squadron.



Local farmers pose with belly-landed Puma Bf 109G V8+63.



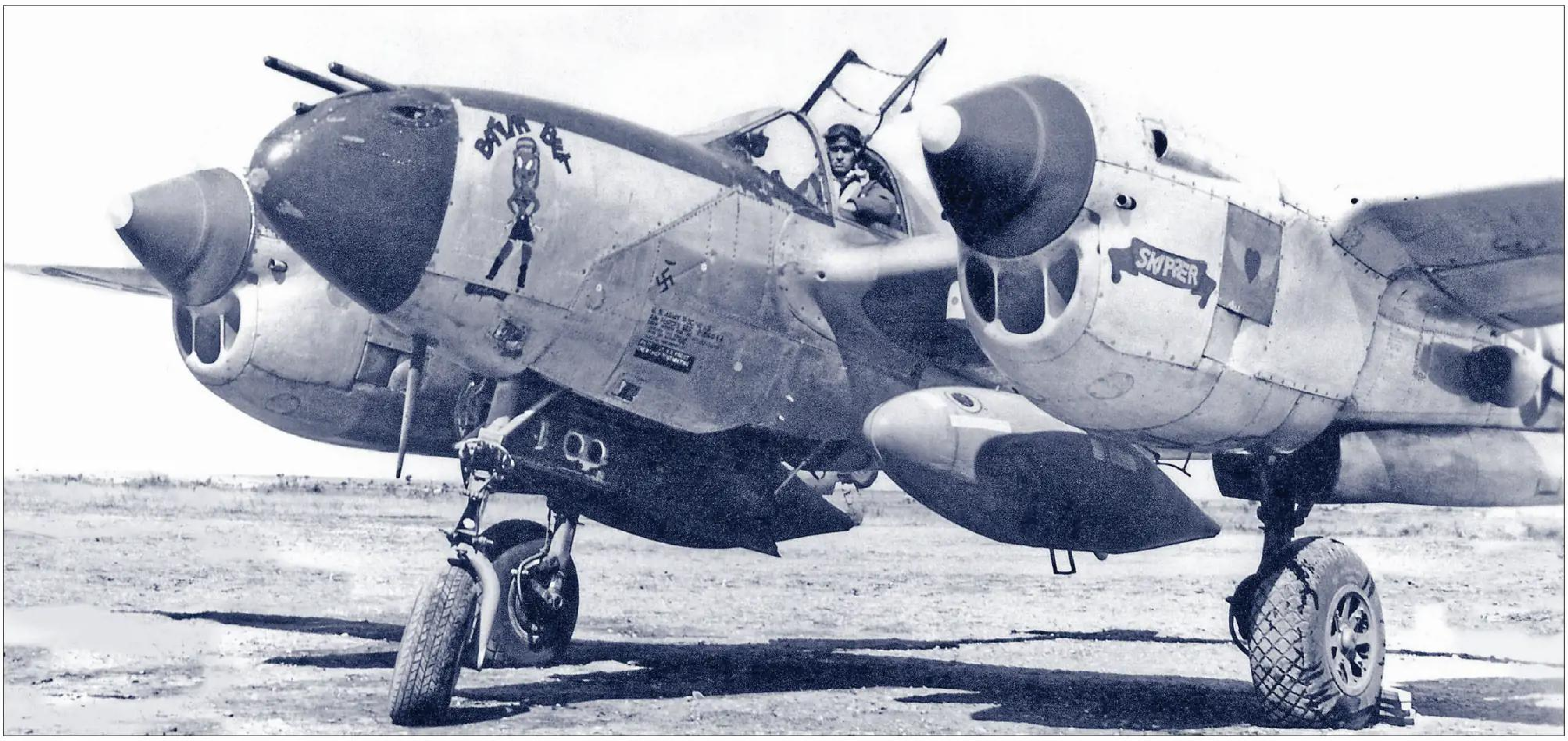
Flight jacket insignia for the 95th FS.

Squadron stayed up high as top cover and did not engage the enemy.

Most of the Bf 109s the 82nd FG pilots fought on 7 July belonged to the *Magyar Királyi Honvéd Légierö's* (Royal Hungarian Air Force's) *101 Vadászrepülő Osztály* (Fighter Group), that carried the name "Pumas." This was not the first time the pilots of those two units had tangled.

One of those Hungarian pilots was Senior Corporal Károly Faludi, of the Puma Group's 2nd Squadron (101/2). Back on 13 April, while serving with the *2/1 Vadászrepülő Század* (Fighter Squadron), based at Ferihegy Airfield just outside Budapest, Hungary's

(continued on page 66)



Another 96th FS Lightning that *may* have been flown on the 7 July mission, *BATTLIN' BET*, P-38J-15-LO USAAF 42-104044 — not coincidentally squadron-coded BB — was assigned to Lt. Ken Frost (seen here in its cockpit).

ACEMAKER

IS COMING TO AN AIRSHOW NEAR YOU!

Come and meet the AceMaker and see our fabulous Lockheed T-33 Shooting Stars in action

Visit ***acemakeraviation.com*** to learn about AceMaker Airshows and the most famous of all combat jet training aircraft

OUR 2025 SCHEDULE

Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ 21/23 March (two-ship)
Altus AFB, OK 11/13 April
Dyess AFB, TX 18/20 April
Langley AFB, 25/27 April
Kirkland AFB, NM 30 May/1 June
Smyrna, TN 6/8 June
Tinker AFB, OK 27/29 June
Bremerton, WA 11/13 July
Milwaukee, WI 17/20 July
Oshkosh AirVenture, WI 21/27 July
Gold Coast Airshow, Australia 15/17 August
Cleveland, OH 29 August/1 September
Wildwood, NJ 5/7 September
Andrews AFB, MD 12/14 September
NAS Oceana, VA 19/21 September
Pacific Airshow, CA 3/5 October
Fleet Week San Francisco, CA 10/12 October
Planes of Fame Santa Maria, CA 12/17 October

Greg “Wired” Colyer with one of the AceMaker T-Birds.

ACE MAKER II
Anthony

FT-610
FT-306

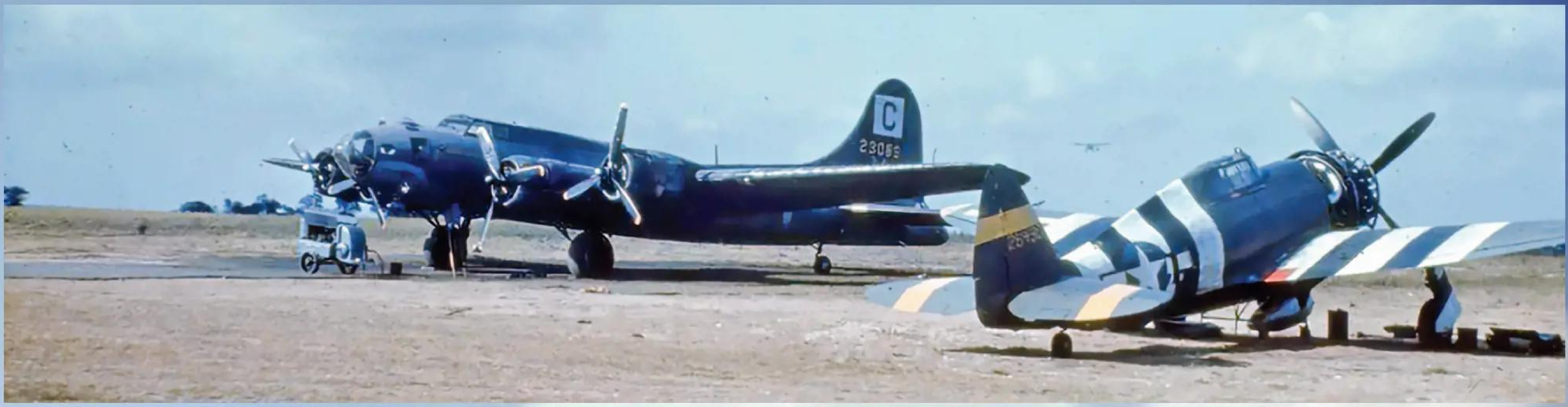
AceMaker T-Birds with a Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II. (Mike Killian)

This photo was taken during the early days of American heavy bomber operations from the United Kingdom. On the left is B-17F 41-24370 *Berlin Sleeper II*. This aircraft was originally flown to England by Lt. William Anderson (325th Bomb Squadron, 92nd Bomb Group) and was named *Paleface*. It was then transferred to the 342nd BS, 97th BG, and assigned to Lt. George D. Burgess and crew who had flown *Berlin Sleeper* 41-9042 on the 17 August 1942 mission to Rouen, France. He renamed his new mount *Berlin Sleeper II* and it flew its first 97th BG mission on 28 August 1942 to Meaulte. It would go on to fly its 100th mission on 13 September 1943 (piloted by Maj. Carl D. Hoffman). The aircraft is significant because it became the first Fort to fly 100 missions and crew chief M/Sgt. Ray Lambert went along to commemorate the event. The bomber would go on to fly it final mission to Ciampino, Italy, on 17 September 1943 and this brought the total to 103. The plane was flown back to the States (possibly for a War Bond tour) but is noted as having been written off at Eglin Field, Florida, during January 1945 after several accidents.

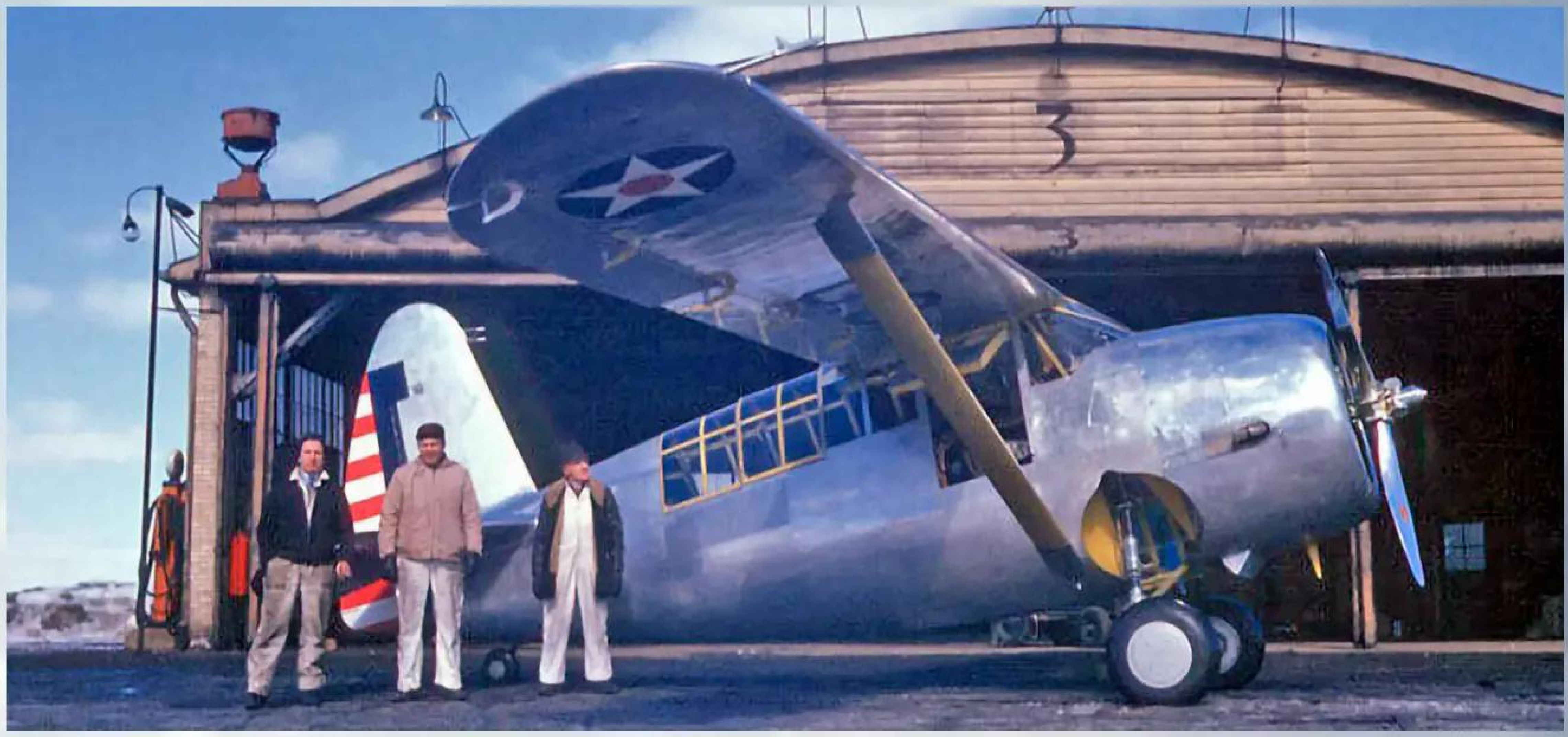
COLORS OF WAR

DELVING INTO THE CHALLENGE HISTORIC ARCHIVES, WE PRESENT A FURTHER SELECTION OF WORLD WAR TWO COLOR IMAGES

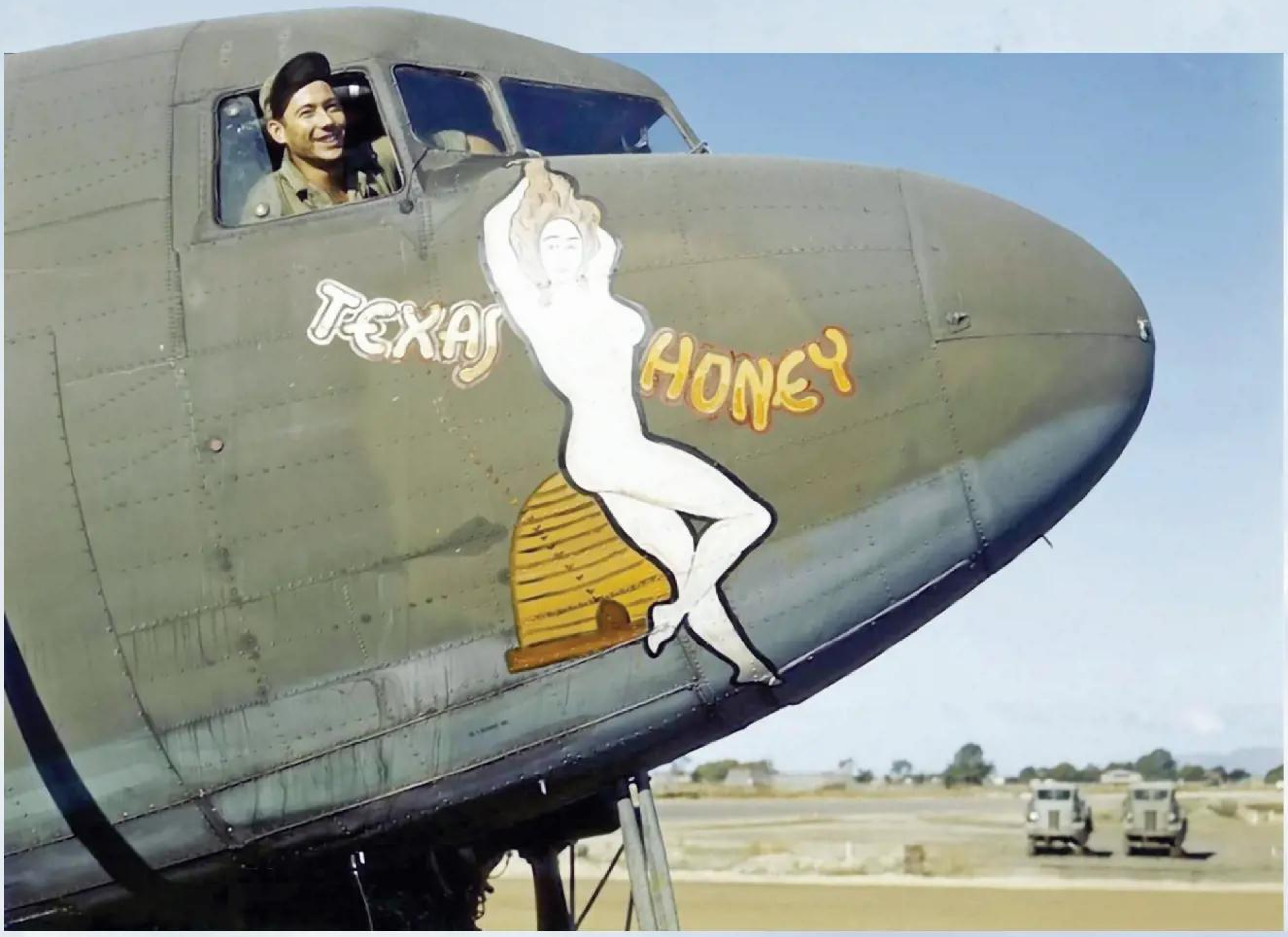
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



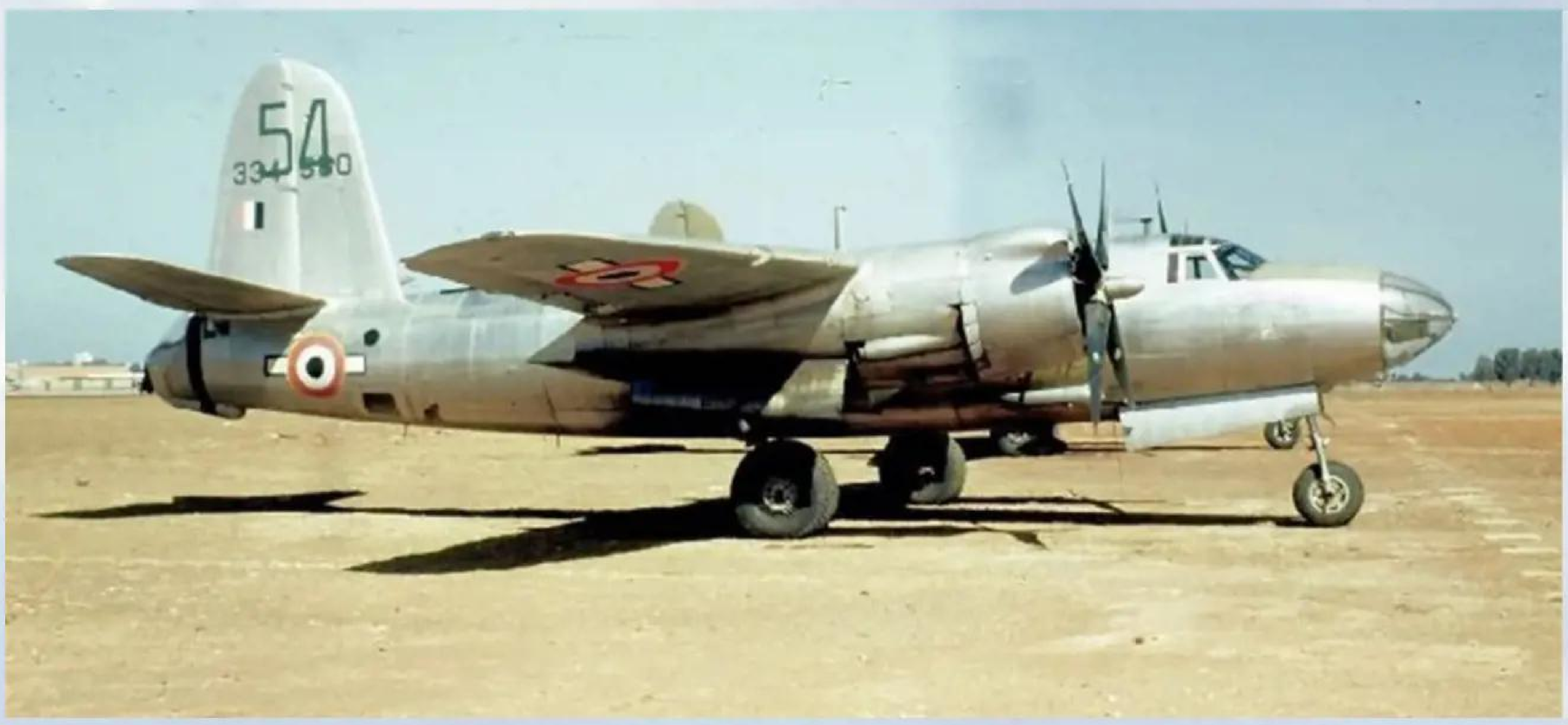
B-17F 42-3089 *Captain Eddie* of the 96th Bomb Group shares ramp space with a P-47D Thunderbolt 42-8190 flown by the 5th Emergency Rescue Squadron. The Thunderbolt carries full D-Day invasion stripes along with the in-theater yellow identification bands. The Fortress was initially assigned to the 335th Bomb Squadron, 95th Bomb Group, and was then transferred to the 338th BS, 96th BG, where it carried the coding BC*V. The Fort survived to return to the USA in January 1945.



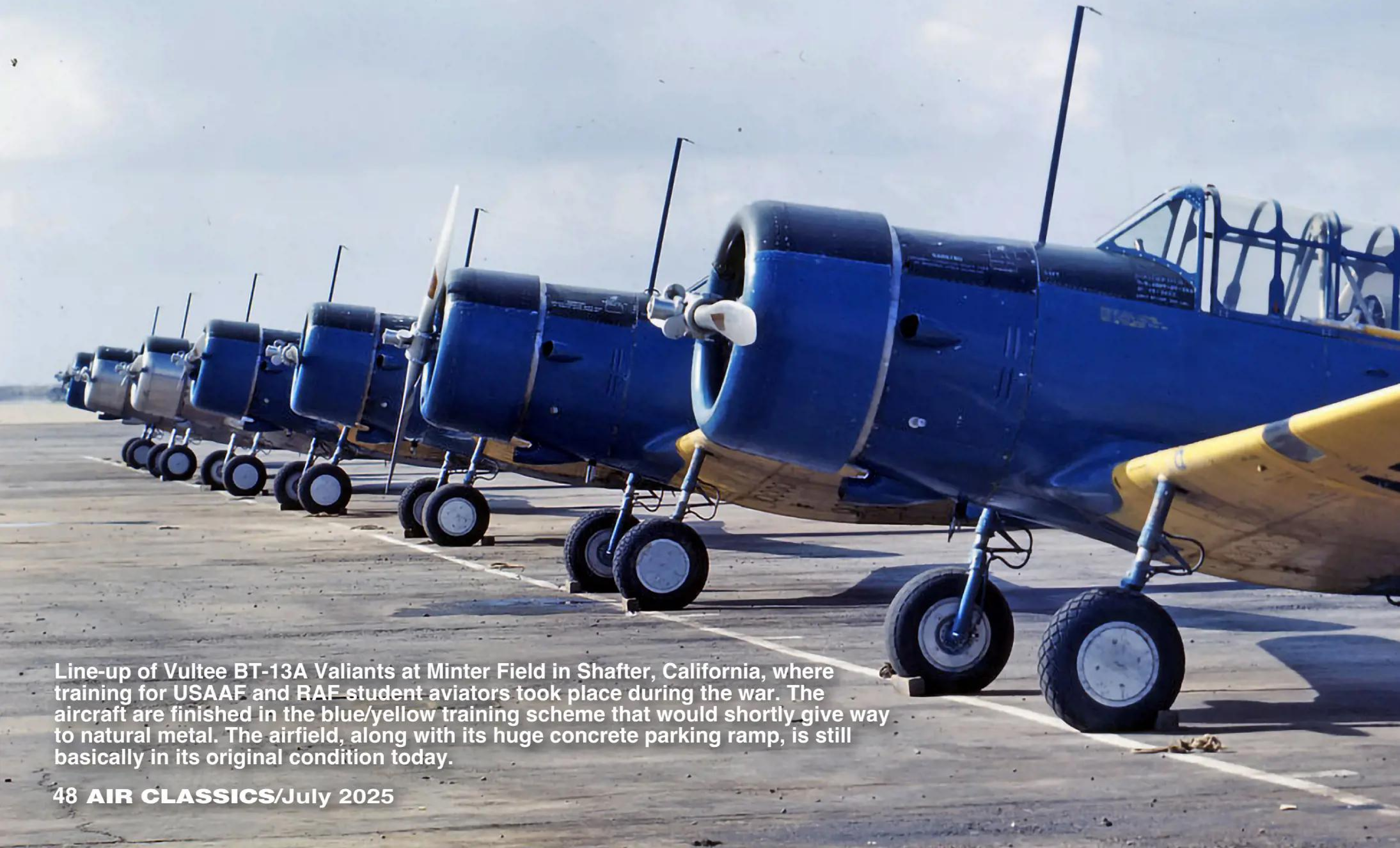
One of the strangest, and least successful, WWII USAAF aircraft was the Curtiss O-52 Owl. The high-wing monoplane was designed for observation duties and the observer also had a .30-caliber machine gun for defense. This early production example has been completed in natural metal finish with Air Corps rudder stripes and the national insignia above and below each wing panel. Later aircraft would be camouflaged in Olive Drab and Neutral Gray.



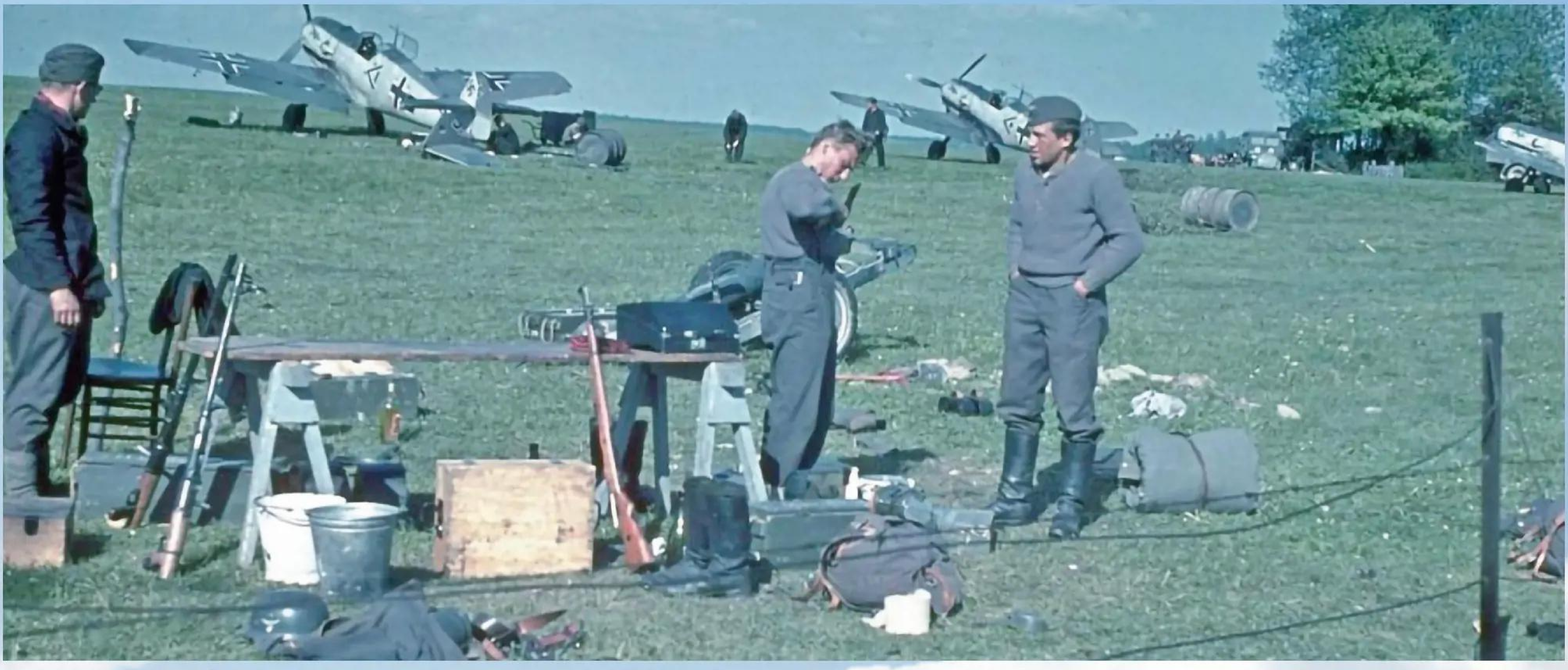
Gooney Birds often carried a variety of colorful nose art and C-47 42-32805 was certainly no exception. *Texas Honey* was built at the Douglas Long Beach factory and was serving with the 55th Troop Carrier Squadron when it was photographed at Brisbane, Australia, during 1943. The aircraft was sold surplus as NC66016 before becoming PP-VCD in Brazil but then it just disappeared.



The Free French Air Force was given numerous Martin B-26 Marauders including USAAF 43-34580, a B-26G. The Marauder was in natural metal finish while the French national yellow, red, white, and blue roundel was applied directly over the USAAF insignia.



Line-up of Vultee BT-13A Valiants at Minter Field in Shafter, California, where training for USAAF and RAF student aviators took place during the war. The aircraft are finished in the blue/yellow training scheme that would shortly give way to natural metal. The airfield, along with its huge concrete parking ramp, is still basically in its original condition today.



Somewhere in France. This color photograph was taken during the Battle of Britain and shows neatly dispersed Messerschmitt Bf 109Es awaiting their next mission across the English Channel. At this point in the war, the camouflage schemes on *Luftwaffe* aircraft were still pretty standardized but all that would soon change.

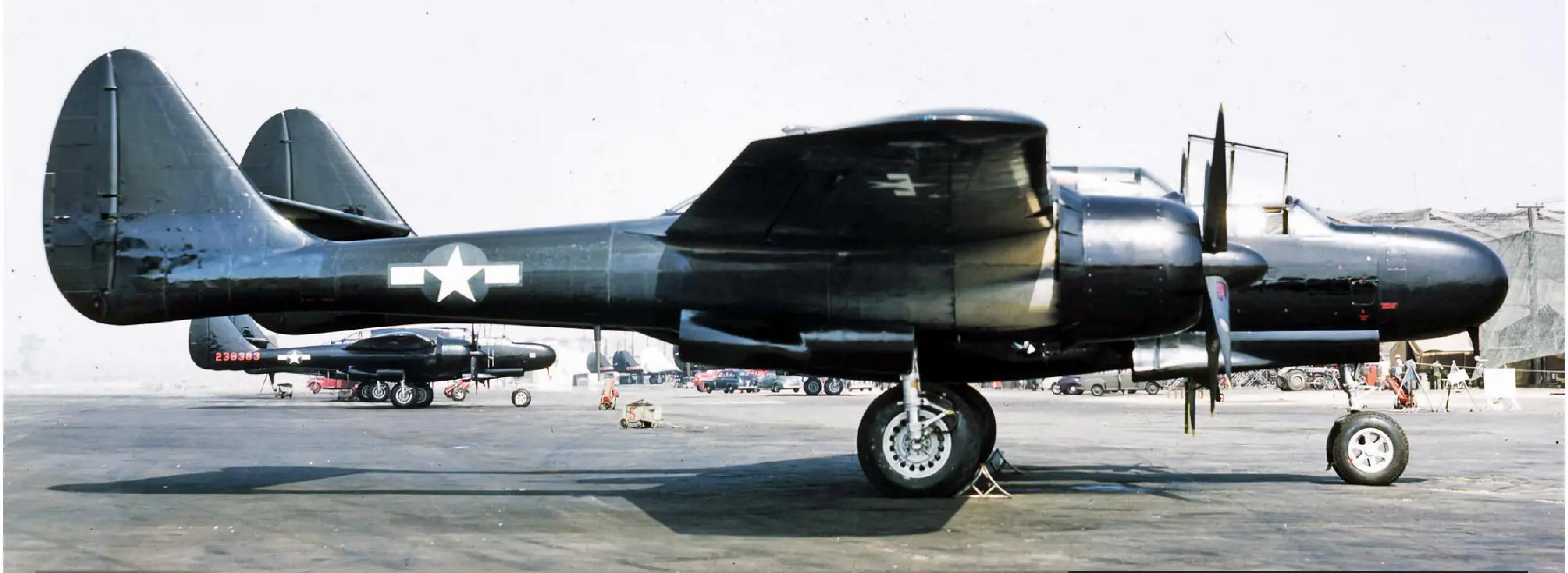
CENTERSPREAD: There are a number of reasons why we are using this close-up image as this month's centerspread. The aircraft is Consolidated B-24D-20-CO USAAF 41-24183 and it was named *The Goon* along with appropriate art work that related to the popular cartoon strip *Popeye*. The aircraft was assigned to the 308th Bomb Group, 374th Bomb Squadron, and it flew at least 24 combat missions in the CBI. The photograph shows the bomber's commander Capt. Samuel J. Skousen and top turret gunner T/Sgt. Arthur J. Benko. This close-up shows some excellent construction detail (along with some missing rivets!) and stenciling. On 14 November 1943, *The Goon* took off from Chengkung Airfield in China for an evening mission to bomb the Kowloon Docks near Hong Kong and then drop mines in the harbor. The crew consisted of: Capt. Samuel J. Skousen, pilot; 1st Lt. Ralph E. Bowers Jr, copilot*; 1st Lt. Daniel J. Palmer, navigator*; 1st Lt. Malcolm S. Sanders, bombardier*; T/Sgt. Archie L. Fleharty, engineer; T/Sgt. William J. Novak, radio operator*; T/Sgt. Arthur J. Benko, top turret gunner/assistant engineer*; S/Sgt. Casper J. Chirieleison, gunner/asst. radio op*; T/Sgt. Robert M. Kirk, gunner*; and Capt. James S. Edney, observer*. Heading to the target, the bomber developed multiple engine problems and the crew jettisoned everything possible to save weight. Skousen expected the engines to fail and gave the crew the option to jump. Those marked with an (*) elected to jump. Sanders and Benko were never seen again while the others were rescued. Skousen and got the bomber back to a safe landing on 15 November at Kweilin Airfield. However, what happened to *The Goon* is not clear — whether it was repaired, scrapped, or disappeared in the fog of war is open to debate. What is significant about Benko is that he was credited with the destruction of 16 Japanese fighters — the most of any bomber gunner in history. Yet, he did not receive much in the way of credit but he is recorded as saying "Skousen was the best in the business." Benko had earned the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. Much later, there was a movement to award Benko with the Medal of Honor but this did not happen. However, in 2009 he was posthumously awarded the Silver Star. Benko was a full-blooded Indian as well as the Arizona skeet and rifle champion during 1939/1940. One of the crew stated, "Art belted his own ammunition, removing all tracers. He did this for two reasons: 1) He didn't want the enemy to know he was being shot at; 2) Tracer fire gave a false trajectory by losing weight as it burns in flight. There was some skepticism at group headquarters as Benko's score began to mount so they sent an intelligence officer on one mission. Art sent seven Japs down that day and made a believer out of the officer." After the war, a Catholic missionary sent information that Benko and Sanders had landed on the Jap side of the river and were captured. After being tortured, both airmen were crucified by the enemy and the missionary managed to photograph their bodies. What an amazing group of Americans.

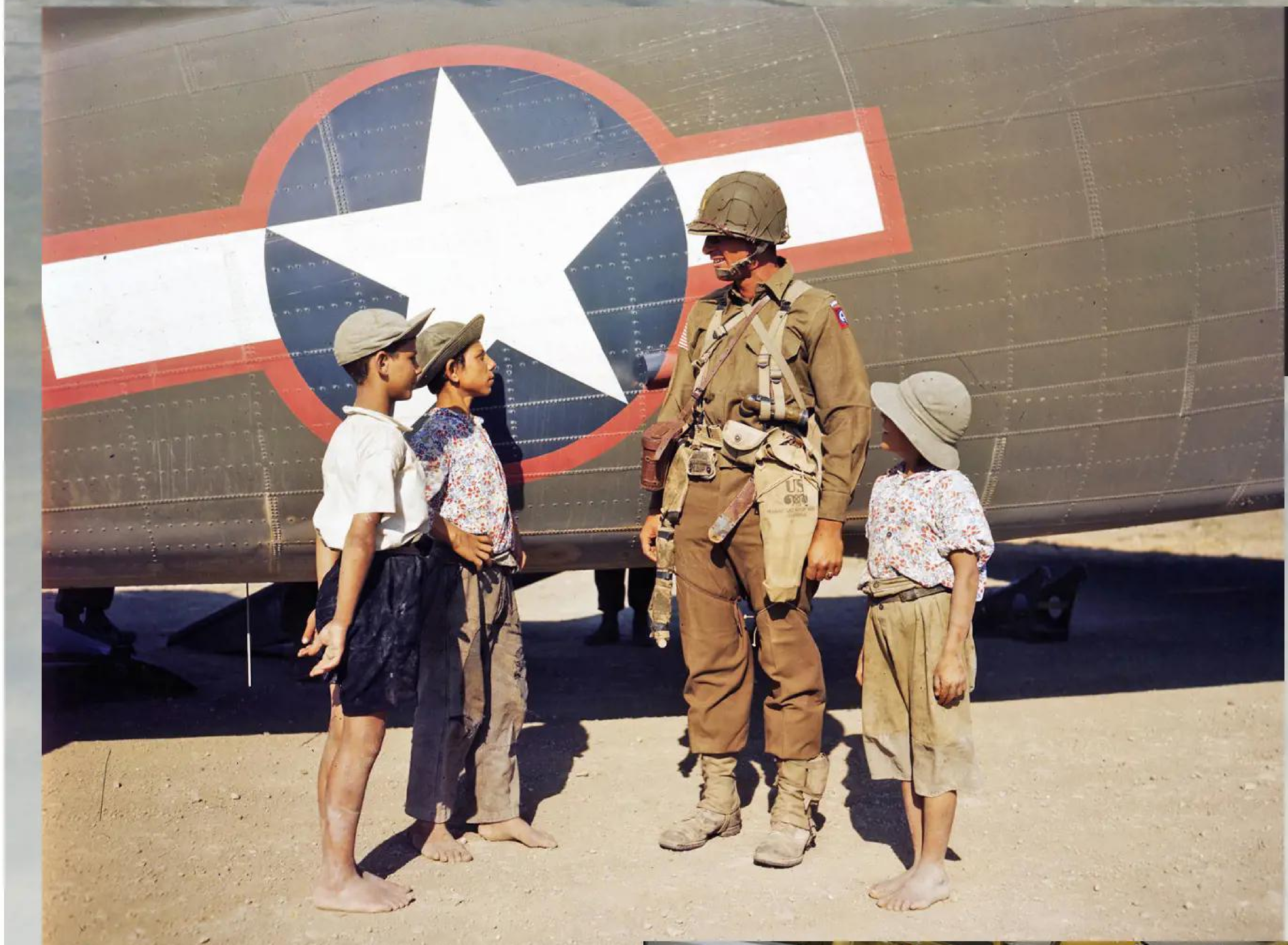
ARMY
11312
L6
L9

"SAMBO"
S. ARMY B24-D
SERIAL NO. 41-24183
IGHT 1200 LBS.
RPLANE WITH
ELS ONLY
FIRE
EXTINGUISHER

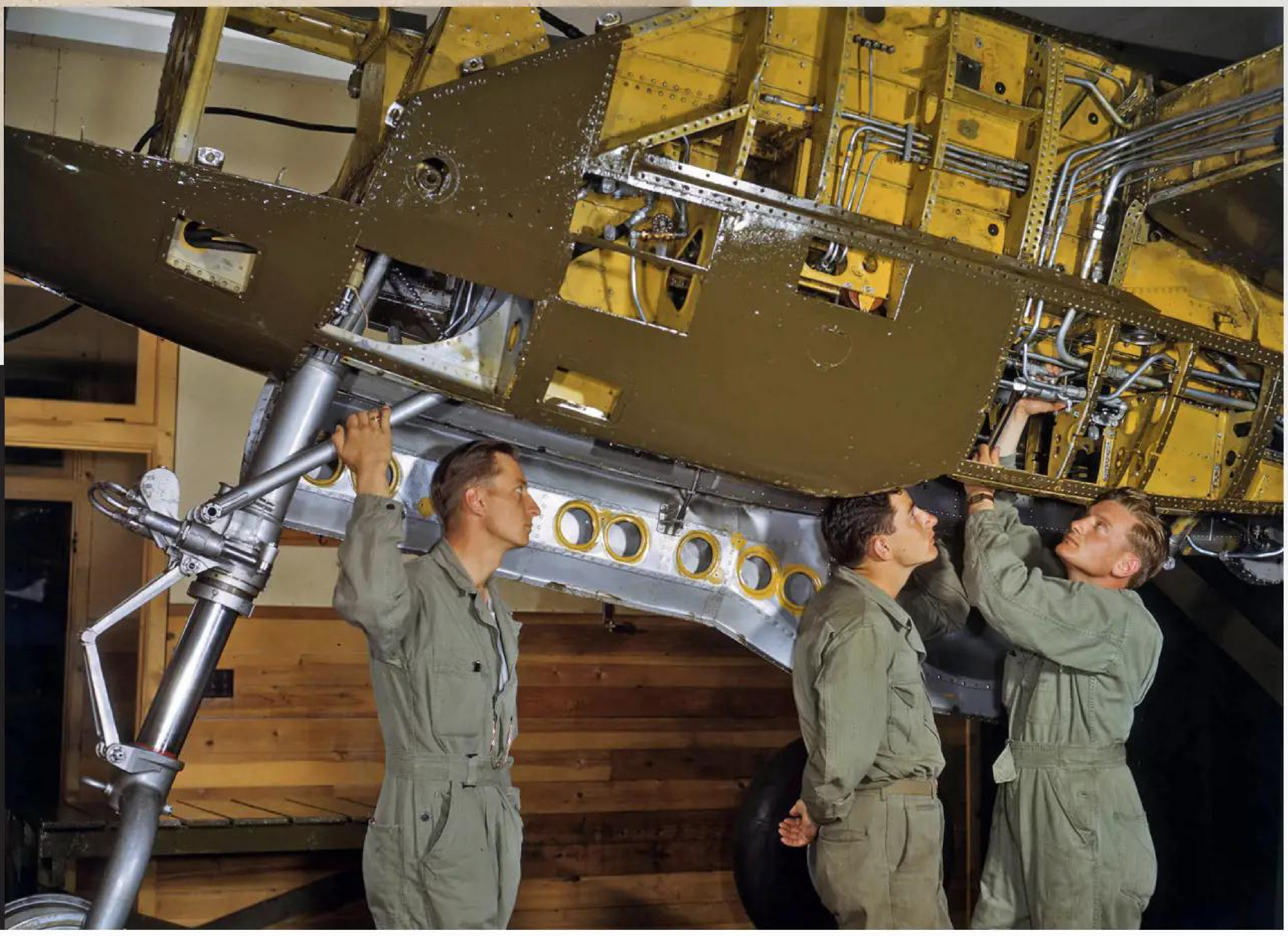
"BENKO"
TUCSON

We are not exactly sure where this photograph was taken but it may have been at the Northrop factory in Hawthorne, California. As can be seen, the buildings have been covered with camouflage netting. The lead P-61A-10-NO Black Widow certainly has a factory-fresh look but it is interesting to note that the serial on the Glossy Black paint has been rather crudely censored out while the Insignia Red serial on the P-61A-11-NO in the background is plainly evident — 42-39383! That particular night-fighter was shipped to the Philippines but was destroyed in an accident on 1 January 1945.

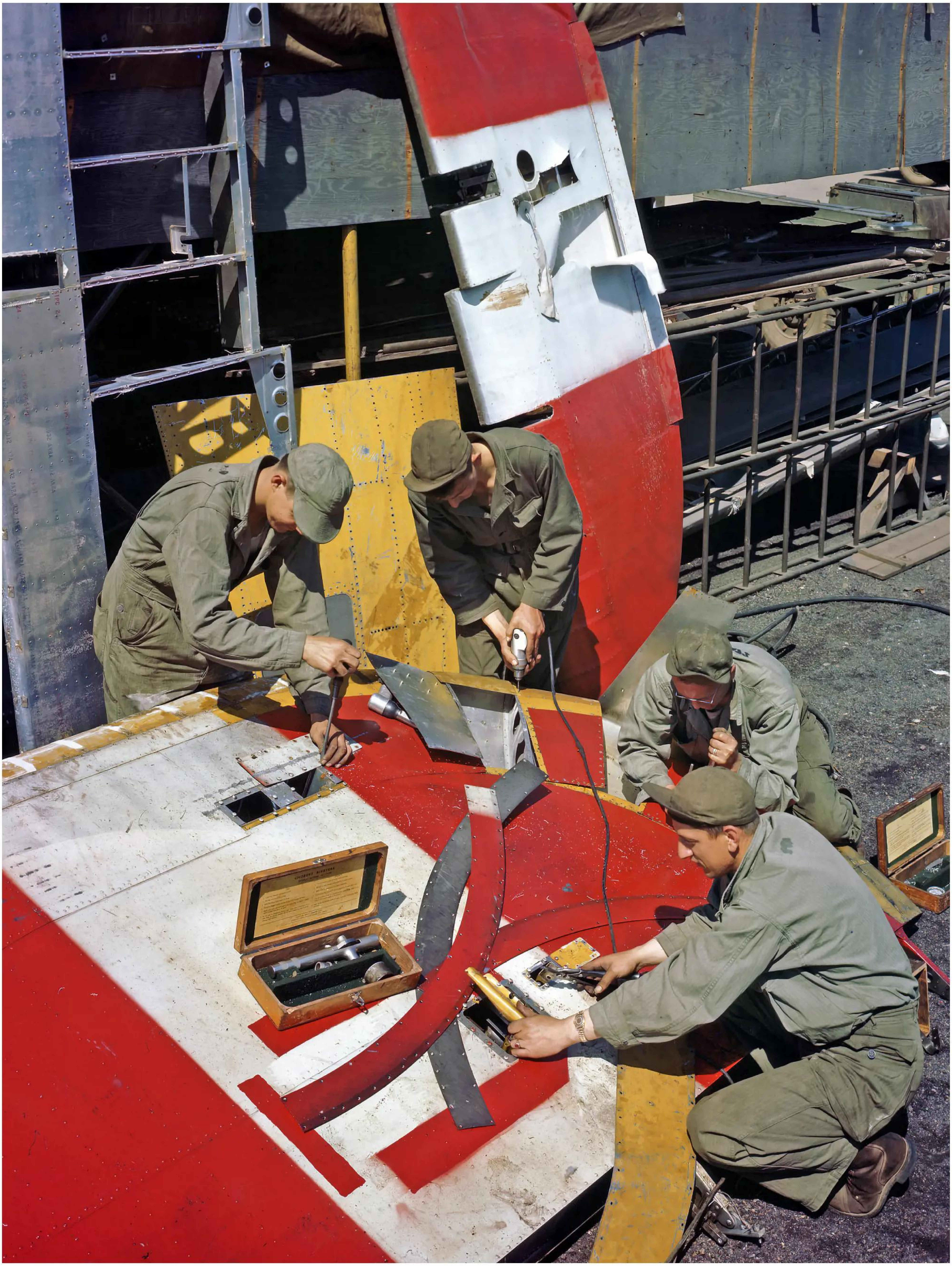




An American paratrooper in Italy talks to some local children while standing next to a C-47. The photograph is particularly nice since it really shows the short-lived Insignia Red band around the national insignia to advantage. The paratrooper is loaded down not only with his weapon but also a flashlight, binoculars, and a gas mask.



Fuselage pod section of a Lockheed Lightning under repair. What makes this photo of interest to current aviation historians is that the exterior has been given a coat of very glossy Olive Drab rather than the usual flat paint. Also, the interior majority of the pod has been sprayed zinc chromate but some portions have not, such as the area immediately above the nose gear. The main nose gear door also appears to be sprayed aluminum while the area around the inspection/lightening holes have been painted with a thicker zinc chromate.



At an American airbase in Britain, mechanics remove what is usable from a battle-damaged Consolidated B-24J Liberator vertical fin and rudder. If the basic airframe had not been damaged, then a replacement vertical fin and rudder would have immediately gone on the bomber so it could be rapidly be returned to combat status. Note on how the airmen are removing a portion of skin and nothing inside the structure has been sprayed zinc chromate yet the piece of skin that is propped up behind them has had the interior sprayed zinc chromate. **AC**

STARFLIGHT SAGA

THE MONSTED-VINCENT MV-1 HOPED TO REVOLUTIONIZE POST-WAR AVIATION

BY HOWARD CARTER

The war was over and for the American aviation industry it truly seemed that the sky was the limit. While the aviation industries of most other countries were either destroyed or worn-out from six years of attempting to produce combat planes with little thought of the coming post-war years, American aviation companies already had plans for producing a new generation of private and commercial aircraft well before the fighting had ended.

In just a few short years, America had become the world's aviation powerhouse as tens of thousands of aircraft poured from dozens of production lines to defeat the Axis. The heads of these companies knew there would be massive military contract cancellations when victory was finally achieved but they also realized that the world was ready for a new generation of airliners while the horde of returning military aviators would surely want their own personal aircraft.

The decision makers at these aviation companies were both right and wrong — new airliners would be extremely important to the American and global economy. Pre-war, there was a reliance on the flying boat for long-range airline flights. The world had an abundance of water along with very few long runways so the flying boat made a lot of sense. During the war, hundreds of runways were constructed around the globe by the American military so the flying boat was suddenly obsolete as a new group of Douglas and Lockheed airliners dominated the skies. America had a huge head-start on the design and construction of modern long-range airliners and the world market for these aircraft had to come to the USA to fill their needs.

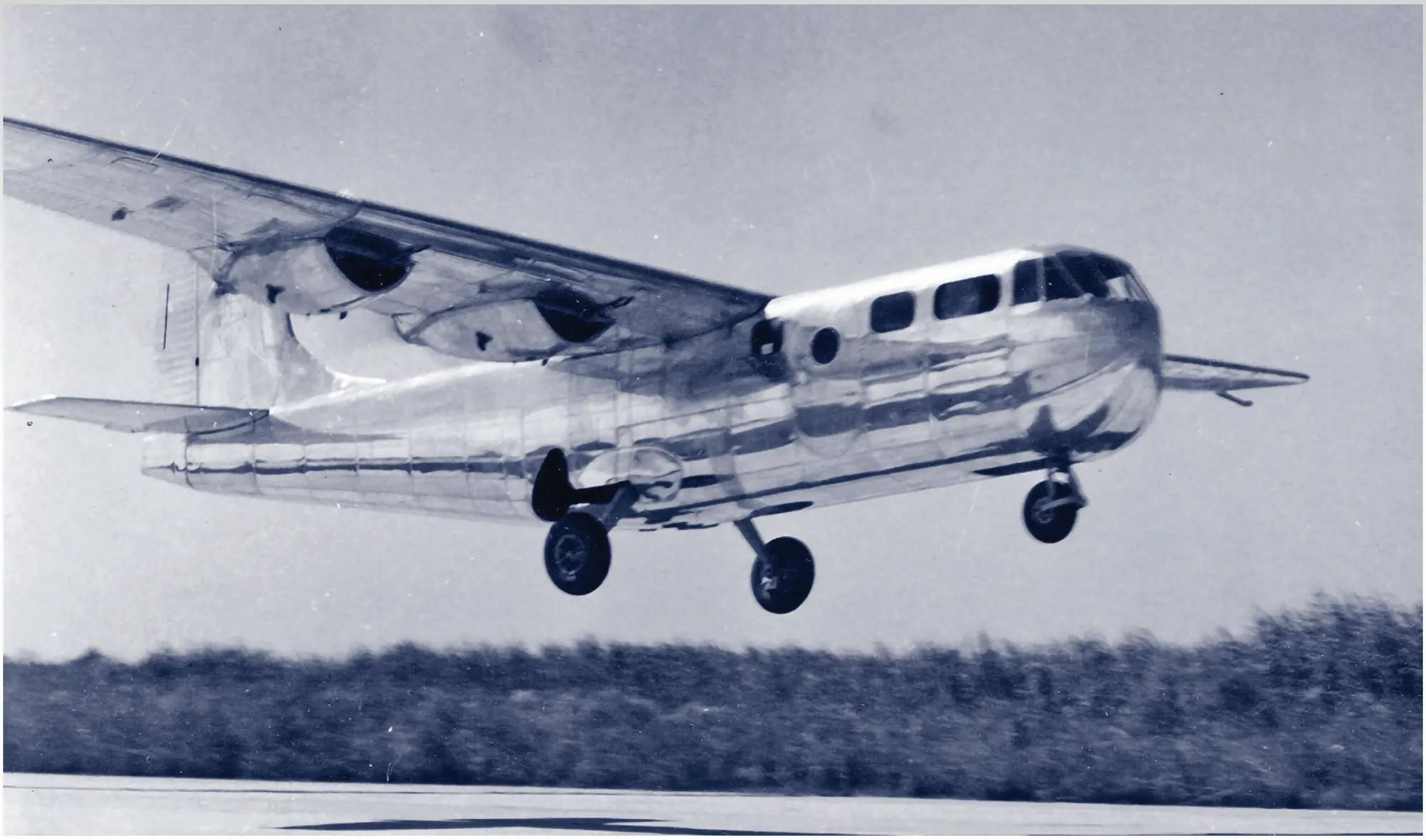
When it came to new general aviation aircraft, the companies got it wrong — very wrong. The majority of returning aviators wanted to get away from the dangers of the war-torn skies and move on with their lives to new jobs and families. To those that did want to fly, there was a vast array of surplus aircraft that could be had for a bargain. Some of the post-war general aviation aircraft were merely rehashes of pre-war fabric and tube taildraggers but there were also some real gamechangers including the sleek high-performing Beech Bonanza. It did not take long for the entire post-war light aircraft market to collapse. Factory ramp space was soon packed with unsold aircraft and several companies shut their doors forever.

Then there was the question of the newly-expanding field of business aviation. Many smaller companies were enjoying an excellent business by modernizing and converting Douglas C-47s, Lockheed Lodestars, and Beech C-45s into executive aircraft. For those desiring a bit more performance, converted B-25 Mitchells and A-26 Invaders were also available but these aircraft had the less desirable Limited certification compared to the Standard licenses of the Lodestar and DC-3.

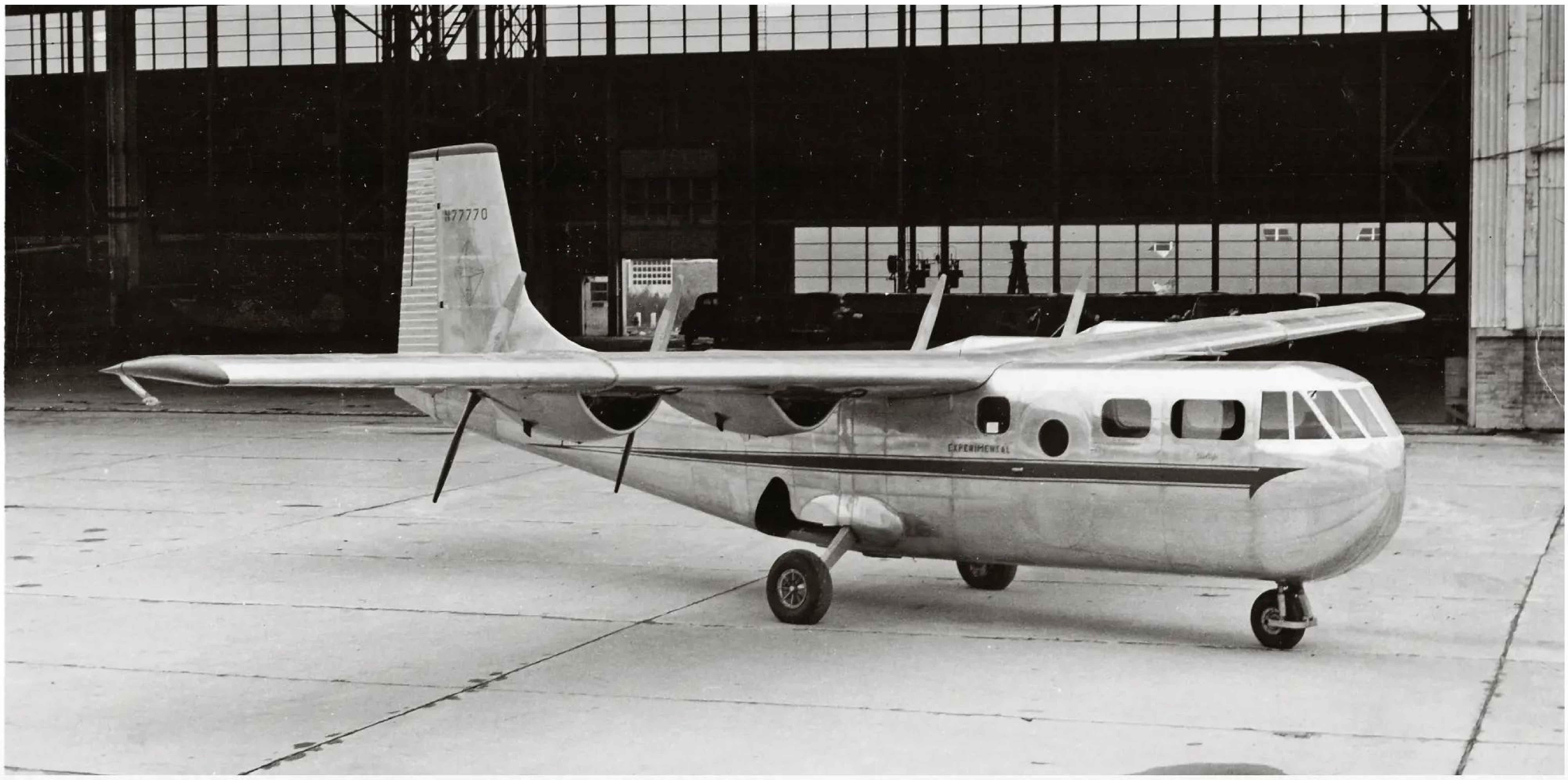
Two returning military officers reasoned that a certain percentage of this market would like a new design — and not a rehash of a military machine. Colonels Robert M. Monsted, an ex-USAAF officer (flying fighters and transports in the CBI), and H. Farley Vincent, a former Army liaison officer and current commander of the Louisiana National Guard's 122nd Bomb Squadron (Light), got together and formed a corporation to create such a new aircraft with headquarters in New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the early years of WWII, a vast industrial plant had been constructed on the eastern edge of New Orleans. Financed by the US government, the plant incorporated a 5500-ft runway, a very large hangar, and numerous taxiways. The field became the new headquarters of the dozen Invaders of the 122nd Bomb Squadron (L) of

The unusual lines of the MV-1 Starflight are seen in this high-angle view. The aircraft was left in its bare metal state and the four Continental C-85 engines were neatly merged into the wing trailing edge.



The Starflight lifts off on its maiden flight on 1 October 1948. Note how the main landing gear would fold back and then up into the fuselage.

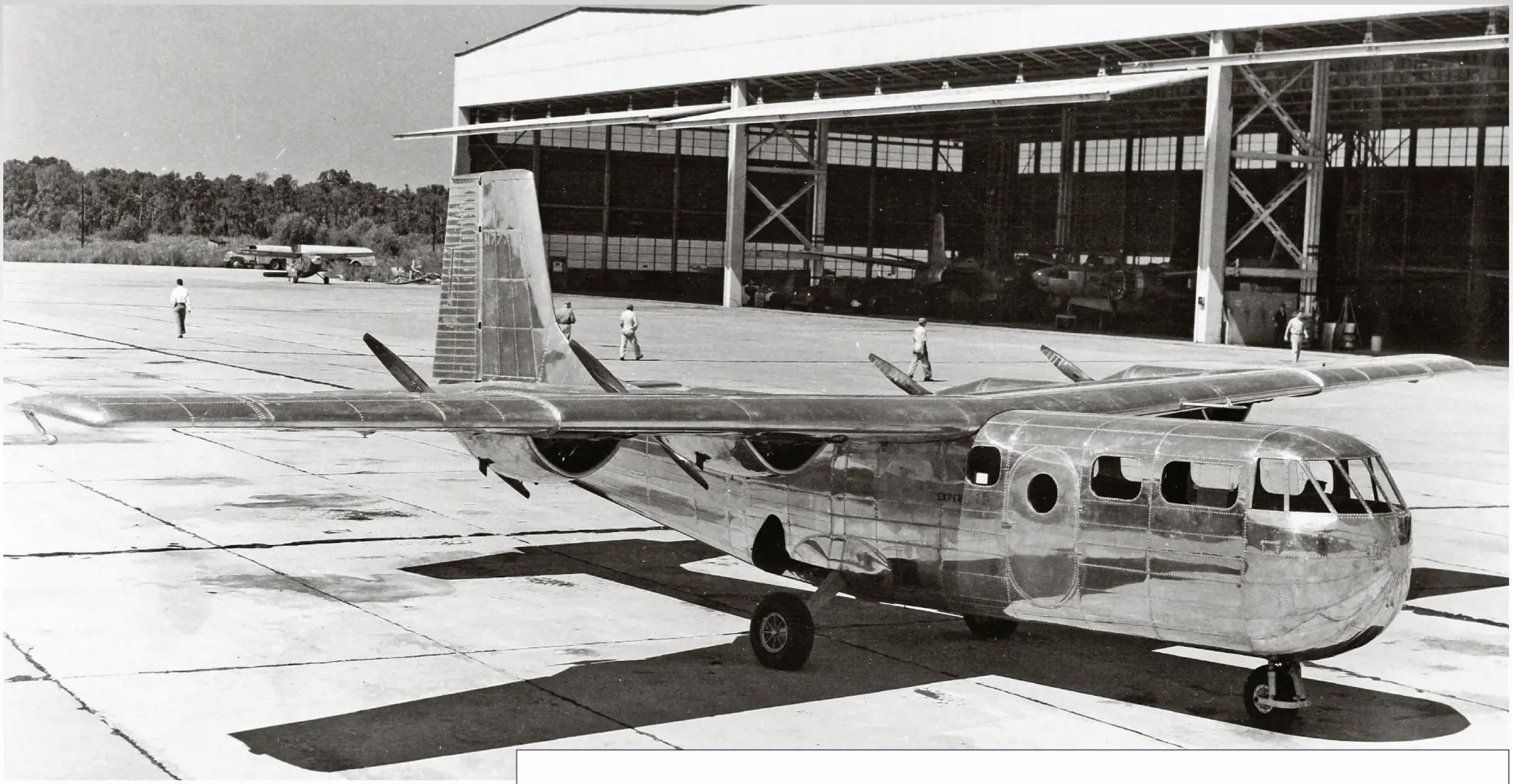


By the time this photo was taken, some trim had been added to the fuselage. The passenger cabin was well ahead of the nearly 50-ft span wing but the front was totally devoid of any streamlining.

the Louisiana National Guard. It would also become home to the new aircraft company.

The pair had an idea for a radical four-engine pusher design that would have an ample cabin for up to six with the potential to grow and carry more passengers. To turn their ideas into actual blueprints, they hired Art Turner who had previously worked in the design department at Lockheed Aircraft.

Since this was a new from-the-ground-up aircraft, a lot of thought went into every aspect of the design, which was given the name of Monsted-Vincent MV-1 Starflight. The first consideration was over powerplants. They wanted a readily available and modern air-cooled engine so that a complex cooling system could be avoided right from the start. The Continental C-85 engine was chosen. Each four-cylinder powerplant produced 85-hp and the engine was in wide production. They reasoned that four fuel-injected C-85s would be needed and, from the start, the MV-1 was going to be a pusher so four two-position Sensenich propellers

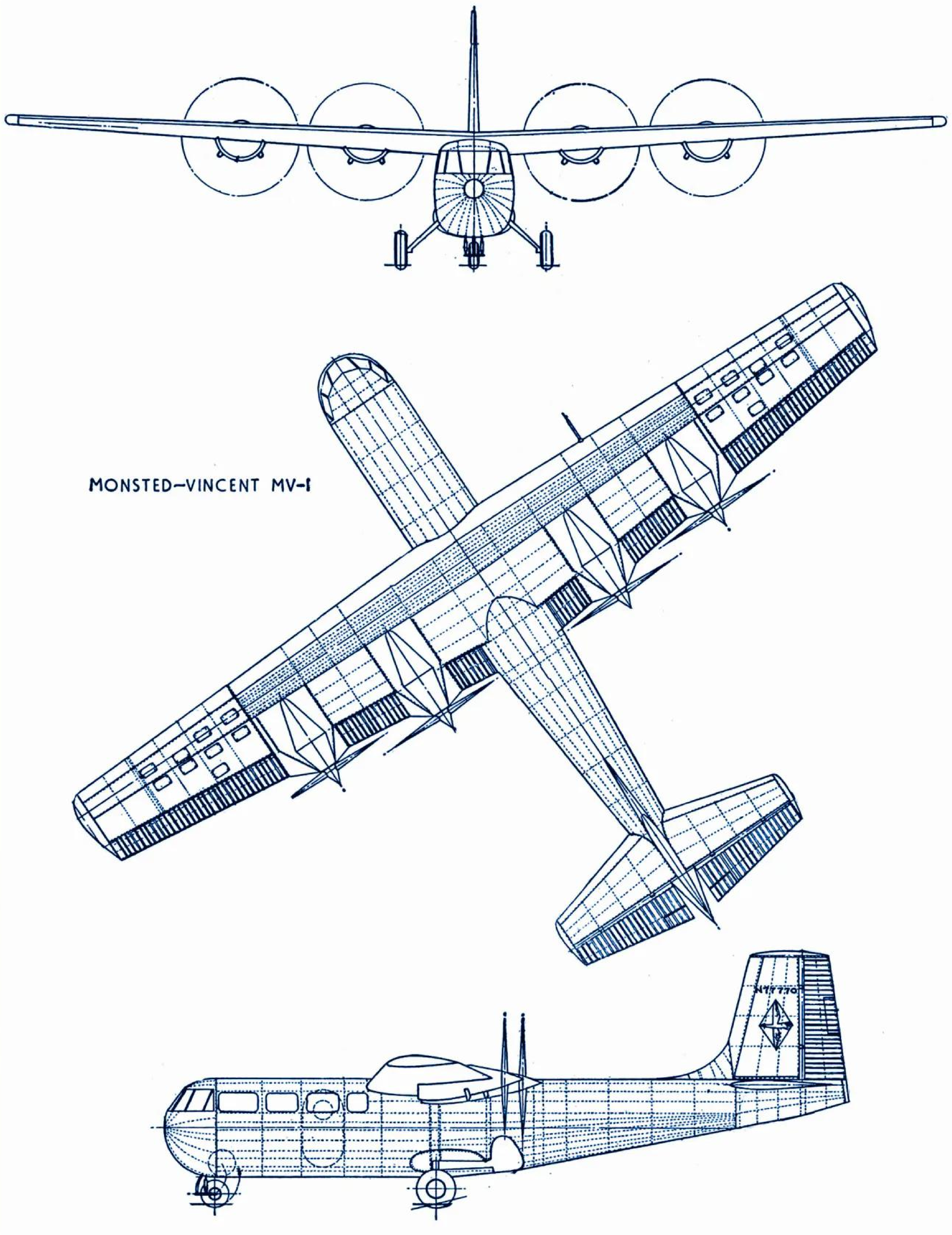


This view shows the large entry door on the right side of the fuselage. The extremely large vertical tail allowed for full control with two engines out on the same side. Note the Douglas A-26 Invaders of the Louisiana National Guard (it had yet to become Air National Guard) in the hangar.

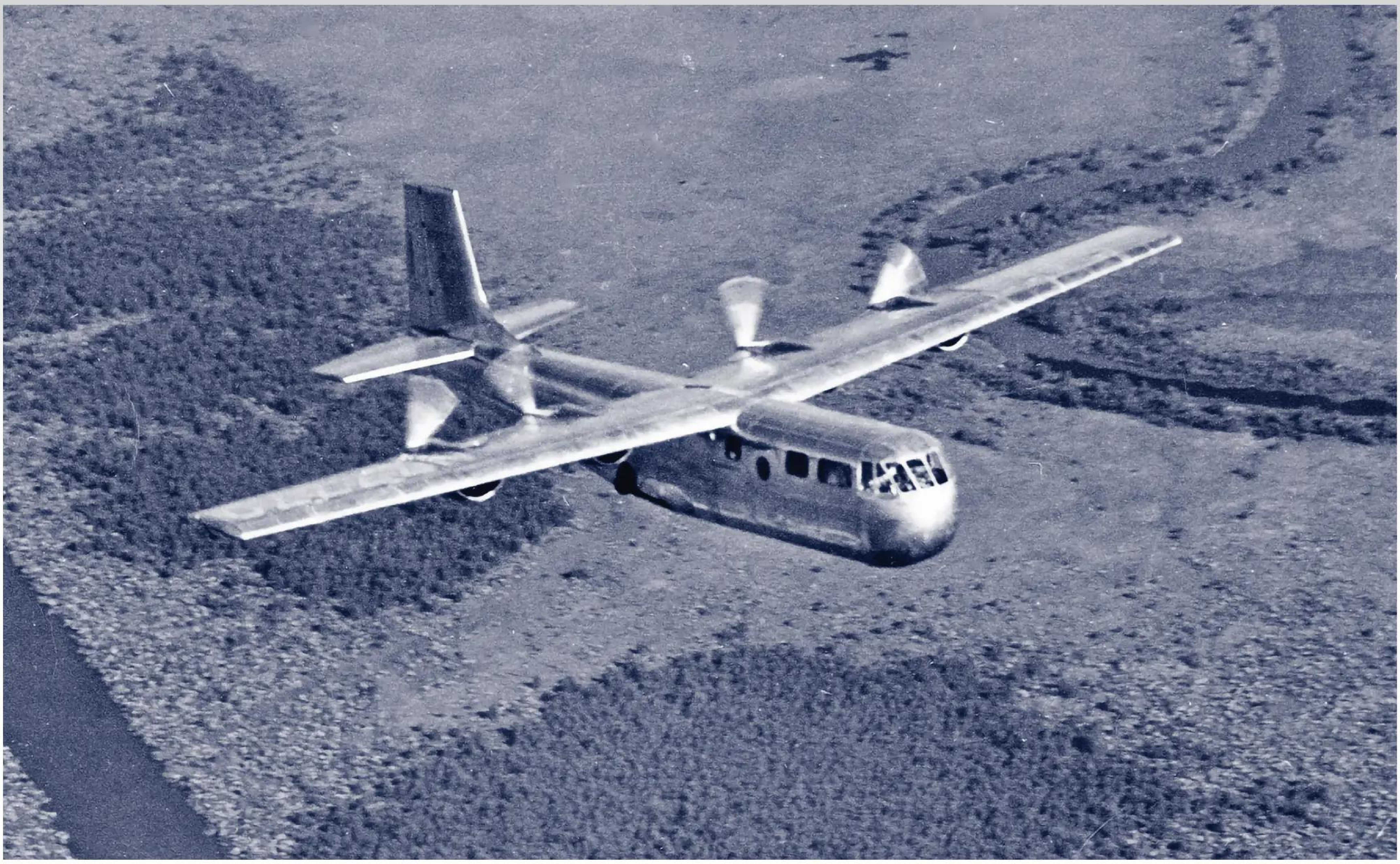
were selected to mount on the engines. They picked the fuel-injection system since this would eliminate the problem of carburetor icing while also eliminating mixture and carb heat controls.

Range was another important consideration and after a lot of figuring, the team came up with a range of eight hours at economy cruise and this would require 43-gallons per engine. Fuel would be carried in integral tanks installed in the outboard wing panels as this would give a better weight distribution with the weight of both the engines and fuel being distributed along the entire span of the wing. This would also give a weight savings. With this longer range, it was decided to install a small all-metal lavatory in the very rear of the cabin.

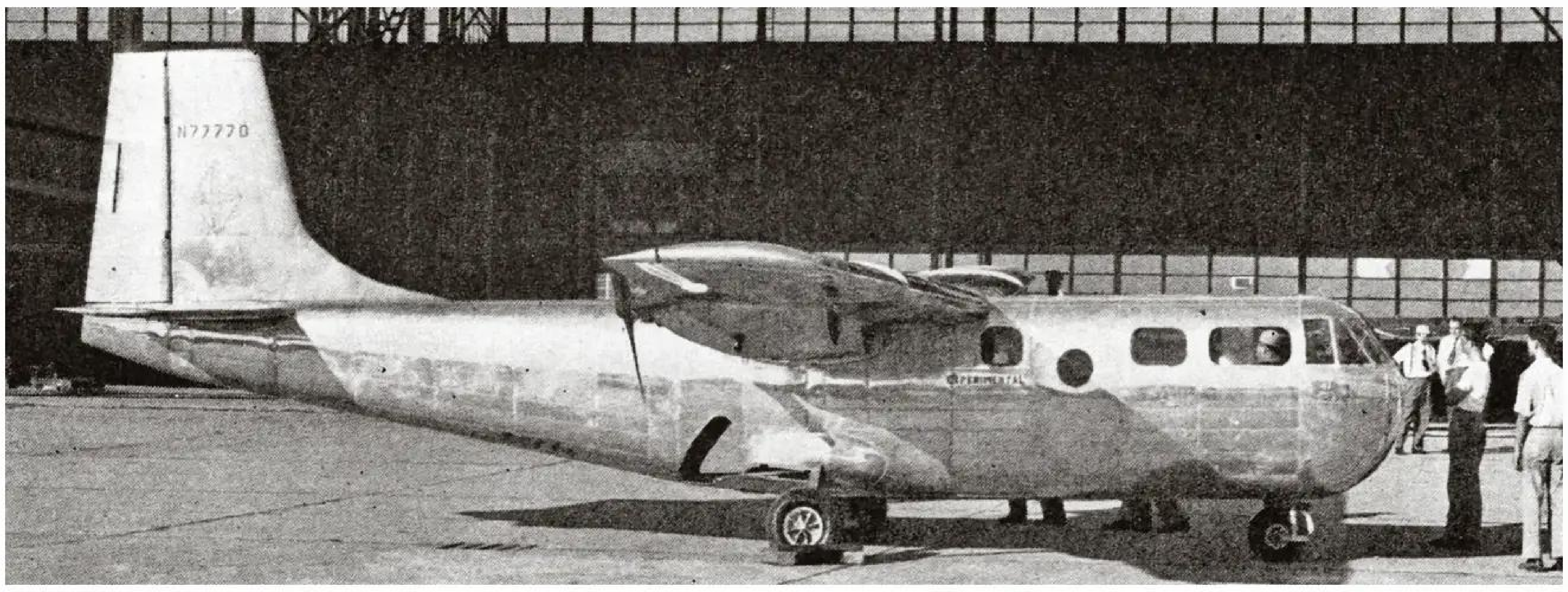
Lots of thought and work went into the placement of the four engines. The group decided that with tractor engines, the weight and balance consideration would seat the passengers under the wing. This method of seating would result in increased cabin noise because the propellers would be aligned between the pilots and passengers. This led to the decision for pusher engines. The props would be behind the trailing edge of the wing and



Three-view drawing of the MV-1.



The MV-1 airborne. Lack of buyer interest, the economy, and the fact the plane had four engines seemed to kill any demand for the craft.



The Starflight being prepared for its first flight. Landing gear system was similar to the Douglas XB-42/XB-43 light bombers.

SPECIFICATIONS MV-1 STARFLIGHT

Span	48-ft 5-in
Length	34-ft 6-in
Empty Weight	3200-lbs
Loaded Weight	5000-lbs
Wing Loading	17.36-lbs/sq-ft
Max Speed	160-mph
Cruise Speed	150-mph
Stall Speed	57-mph
Ceiling	16,000-ft
Range	1200-mi
T/O Distance	920-ft
Fuel	172-gal
Powerplant	Continental C-85 (then C-90)

away from the cabin. However, weight and balance came into play. With this arrangement, the length of the forward fuselage would have to be perhaps abnormally long. This led to the wing being designed around a conventional box beam. The accessory side of the engine was placed as near the rear spar as possible with the propellers right behind the trailing edge. This meant that short drive shafts would be needed but with the powerplants mainly buried in the wing structure with just a small portion protruding beneath the wing, cowling of each engine would be at a minimum. With buried engines, cooling is often a problem so a cooling fan was incorporated into the wing along with large underwing air intakes. Attached directly to the extension shaft, the engineers thought this would cool the C-85s by drawing air through the baffling system. When the plane was airborne, each fan would "float" while ram pressure into the front of the cowling would do the cooling work.

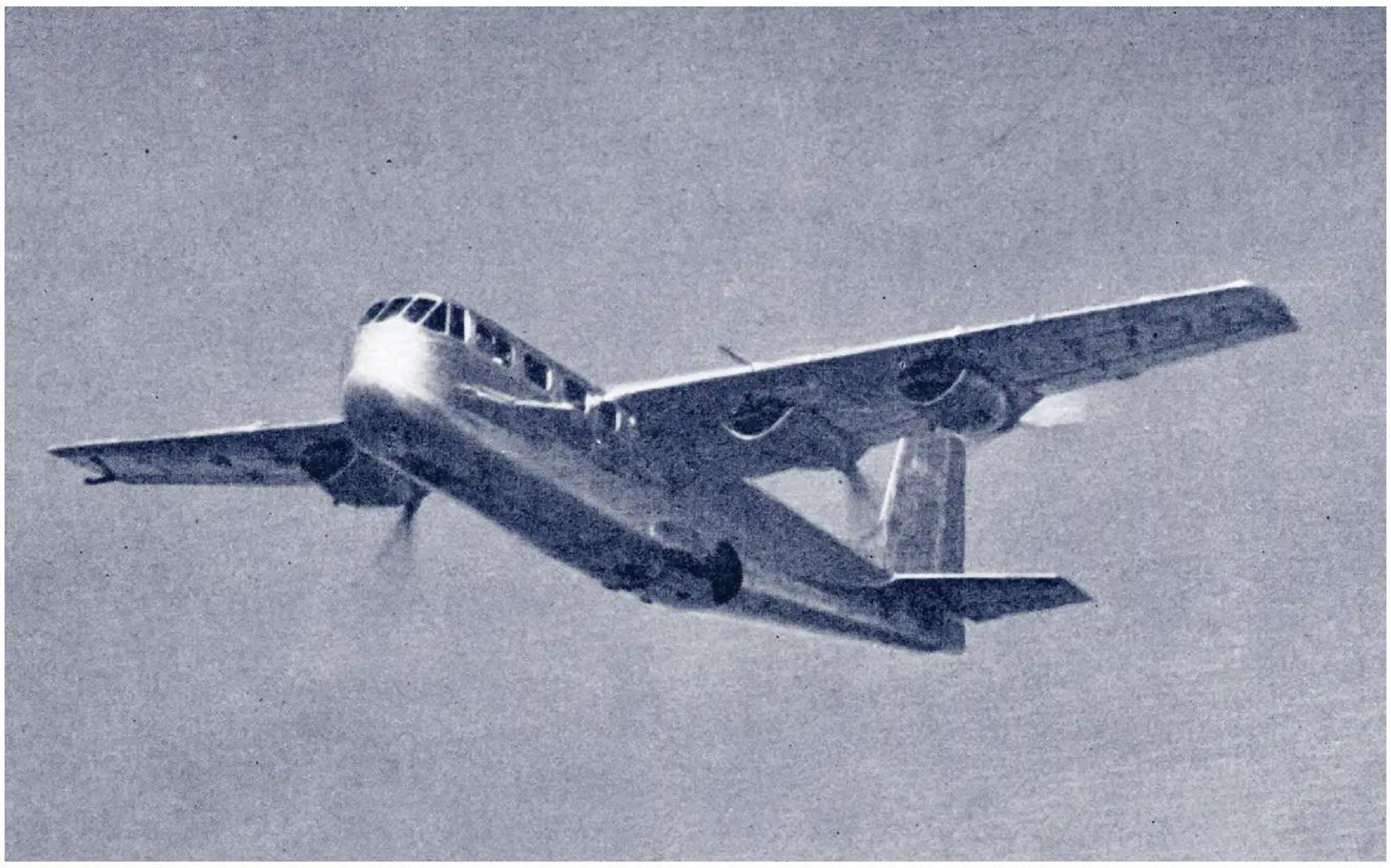
From the start, the company knew they wanted their aircraft to be all-metal and 24ST aluminum was chosen for building. The fuselage was of substantial construction since it would house not only the cabin but along the landing gear system. For correct balance, a longer forward fuselage was required but this placed the passengers well away from engine/prop noise while also affording an outstanding view for the up to six occupants. The tricycle landing gear was designed so that the nose leg would retract into a box located between the two pilots. The main gear system was rather interesting and was somewhat akin to the Douglas XB-42/XB-43 bomber. These gear legs would retract into the rear of the fuselage instead of into the wings. The designers preferred this arrangement because it eliminated breaking up the structure of the wing panels and, instead, left the basic wing structure uninterrupted from tip to tip.

H. Farley Vincent was president of Monsted-Vincent Aeronautical Inc. and during a 1948 interview regarding the aircraft, he stated: "In aviation we are in the transportation business. Our transportation medium is the air ocean. Every rock in the desert, every tree in the forest, every spot on the sea is washed by this medium. There is no place on earth that cannot be reached by air. It is a safe assumption, therefore, that transportation which can navigate this medium cannot help but make spectacular progress. And this has been proved so. Within the span of a few years, our airlines have gone from the single-engine open-cockpit biplane stage to the huge four-engine skyliners that serenely and safely cross the vast sea and land masses on the earth, and with complete acceptance from the traveling public.

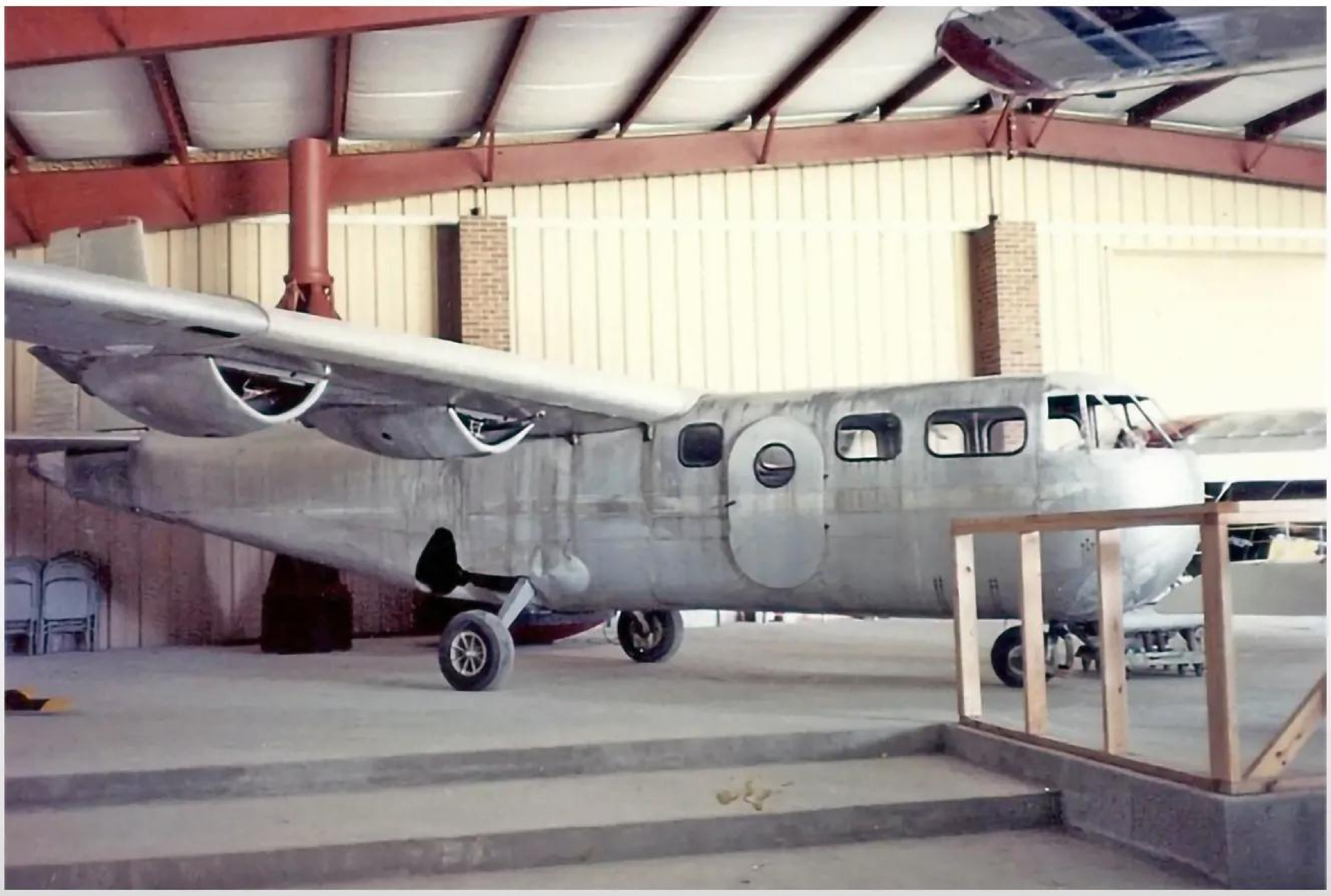
"In the matter of short-haul transportation, it is difficult for an airplane to compete with an auto. But for business fixing, the aircraft of the future must have long range — and this is the great undeveloped field; fast transportation over long distances. When long-range, safe, comfortable and economical flying is available on a private plane basis for the business public, there will develop a field in aviation which will surpass anything ever done by the airlines or the military.

"There are some people in business who have not yet thought in terms of aircraft for business. But let their competitors begin to use their own planes, let them begin to corral the available business, and see what this fellow will do. He'll be there with a business plane! We think the

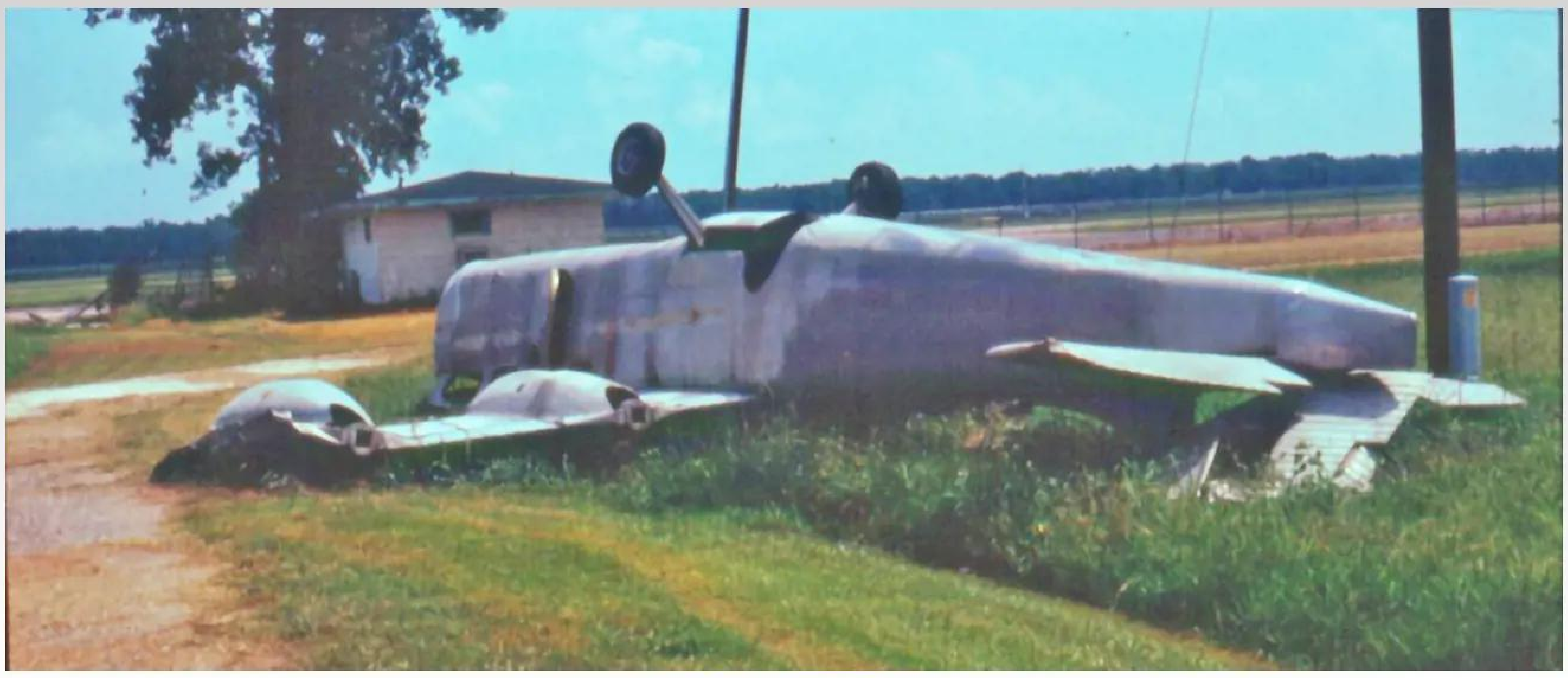
Test pilots go over notes prior to a flight in the MV-1.



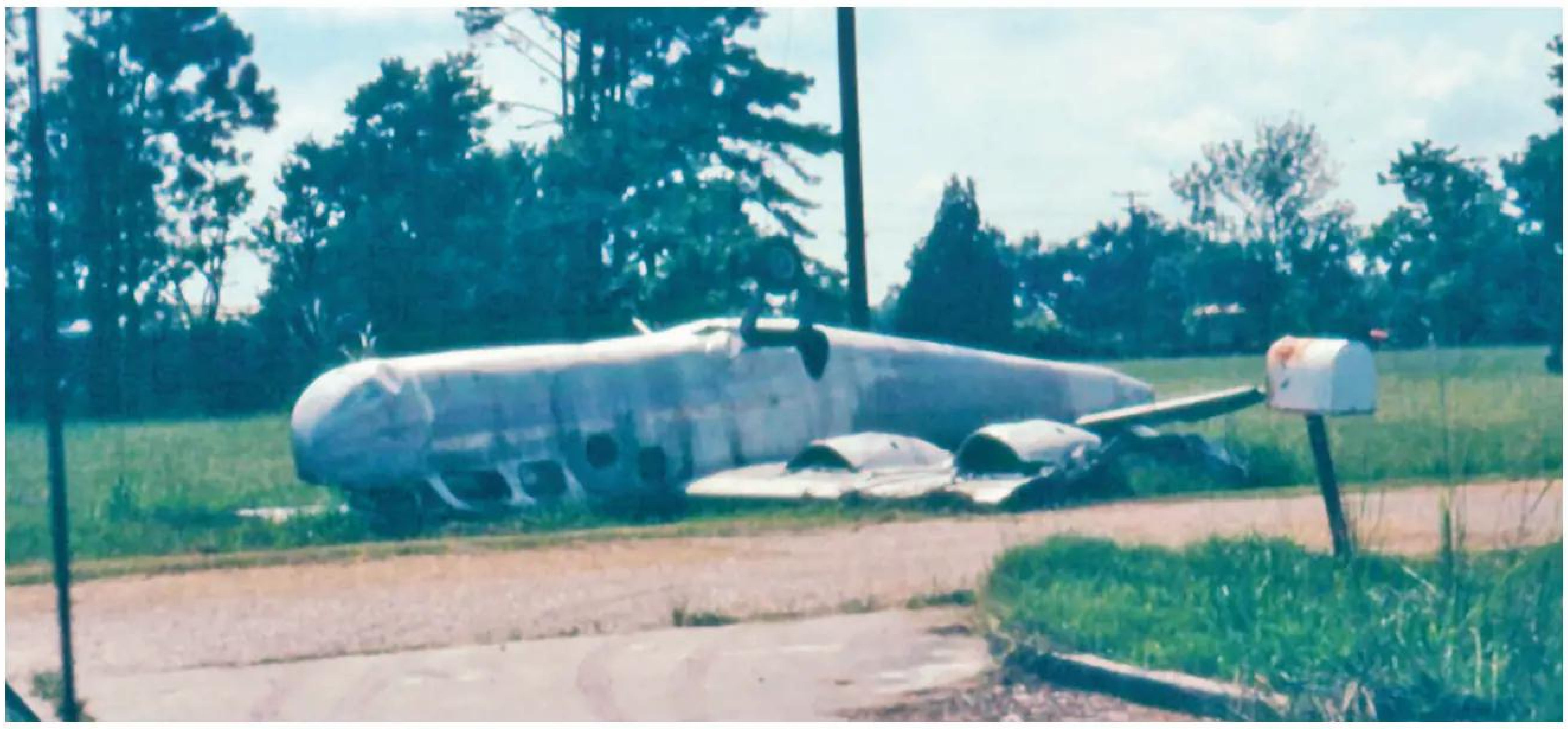
The Starflight passes overhead, showing the large airscoops for the engines.



The Starflight never finished its flight test program. It is unclear what happened to the plane between the late 1940s and when it was donated to a museum in the 1980s. This view shows the aircraft in a hangar so perhaps it was stored during that time period.



It appears the Starflight was outside the museum when Hurricane *Andrew* hit. The plane was blown up onto its nose and then onto its back, causing severe damage. (Han de Ridder)



The crushed remains of the MV-1. Apparently, the aircraft was moved to a hangar for future restoration, which never happened. Hurricane *Rita* then hit the area and destroyed the hangar and apparently the Starflight. (Han de Ridder)

Starflight will be the air travel ticket for the businessman."

This rather visionary and optimistic interview was given before the first flight of Starflight. Once the design had been finalized, construction moved forward in a rapid manner and the craft was notable for its very large vertical tail, which would give excellent control authority if two of the engines were shut down. The aircraft was completed in less than two years and taxiing tests were undertaken before it went aloft for the first time on 1 October 1948 with the experimental registration NX77770.

Right from the start, it became obvious that the C-85s were just not powerful enough for the size of the aircraft. The engines were upgraded to C-90s but this was a relatively minimal increase in power. Many of the post-war designs were underpowered and the MV-1 Starflight was certainly no exception. The C-90 was approved for takeoff power of 95-hp for five minutes and a continuous power rating of 90-hp and this gave the MV-1 a total horsepower rating of 360-hp, which was not a lot for the size of the aircraft.

By the time the Starflight took to the air, the general aviation market had pretty much collapsed and this led Col. Farley to comment, "The optimists predicted that the skies would be darkened with private aircraft, and the manufacturers, happy in this promise, began to roll the same old single-engine aircraft off the production lines by the thousands [NOTE: Apparently he was ignoring aircraft like the Bonanza and Navion], blissfully ignoring the limitations of these aircraft. Well, they sold — for a little while — then the ceaseless flood glutted the market. Now, gloom is the order of the day. The new attitude of pessimism is as wrong as the early post-war dream. With an aircraft, such as we have built, new horizons will be opened to the private and business flyer."

Test flying continued but apparently there was a minor accident that damaged the aircraft. Projections for the production of the MV-1 showed that it would be a very expensive plane to produce along with the fact that it had four engines and four propellers did not help the cost projections. Beech was cranking out its Model 18 in a variety of configurations while the military was releasing many of the similar C-45s that could be easily converted to civilian use so the MV-1 really did not stand a chance.

Little is known about the flight test program but the MV-1 never got through the certification process. This was probably due to investors backing out and the money running out. It appears the collapse came quickly and by the end of 1948 the company was out of business. There were simply no customers for the plane and no money to upgrade and re-engine the basic design so the MV-1 remained a minor, but quite interesting, footnote in aviation history.

Sometime in the 1980s, the MV-1 was donated to the Wedell-William Aviation & Cypress Mill Museums in Patterson, Louisiana. But where was the aircraft for over three decades prior to the donation? Not surprisingly, we could not get an answer from the museum. It appears that it may have been hangared and thus protected from the elements but it seems that once the plane was donated, then it was placed outside (but apparently rarely photographed). Then on 26 August 1992, Hurricane *Andrew* hit the area with predictable results.

In the raging storm, the MV-1 was picked up by the ferocious winds, stood on its nose, and then tossed onto its back with resulting heavy damage. The wrecked aircraft lay in the weeds, looking like a beached whale. The entire area was devastated by the storm but one news release said that the MV-1 was going to be rebuilt, since it was the only four-engine aircraft to be designed and constructed in Louisiana.

The rebuilding, and again not surprisingly, never happened. One source noted that the damaged airframe had been disassembled and then moved to a hangar at "an undisclosed location." In September 2005, along came Hurricane *Rita* and this once again demolished the area and it was reported that the hangar and the MV-1 were "destroyed." As noted, attempting to find a satisfactory answer from the museum has proven to be not possible. If any readers can help fill in the final fate of the unique MV-1 (or indeed provide more details on the flight test program), then we will be able to close the history on this interesting machine. **AC**

FLY THE EXPERIENCE!

Western
102
The Wabbit Expwess

NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE FLYING THE CLASSIC DC-3 AIRLINER OR COMBAT VETERAN C-47 WITH VINTAGE FLYING MACHINES

That's correct, you now have the opportunity to take instruction in these great American classics from Douglas Aircraft Company

PIC AND SIC PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW

TWO-DAY SECOND-IN-COMMAND EXPERIENCE

- Includes eight hours of ground school
- 1.5 hours of DC-3/C-47 flight instruction for FAA-certified multi-engine rated pilots

PILOT-IN-COMMAND EXPERIENCE

- Available for FAA-certified multi-engine rated pilots
- Contact us to create your custom program

YOU WILL BE TRAINED IN OUR 1941 DC-3A or 1944 C-47

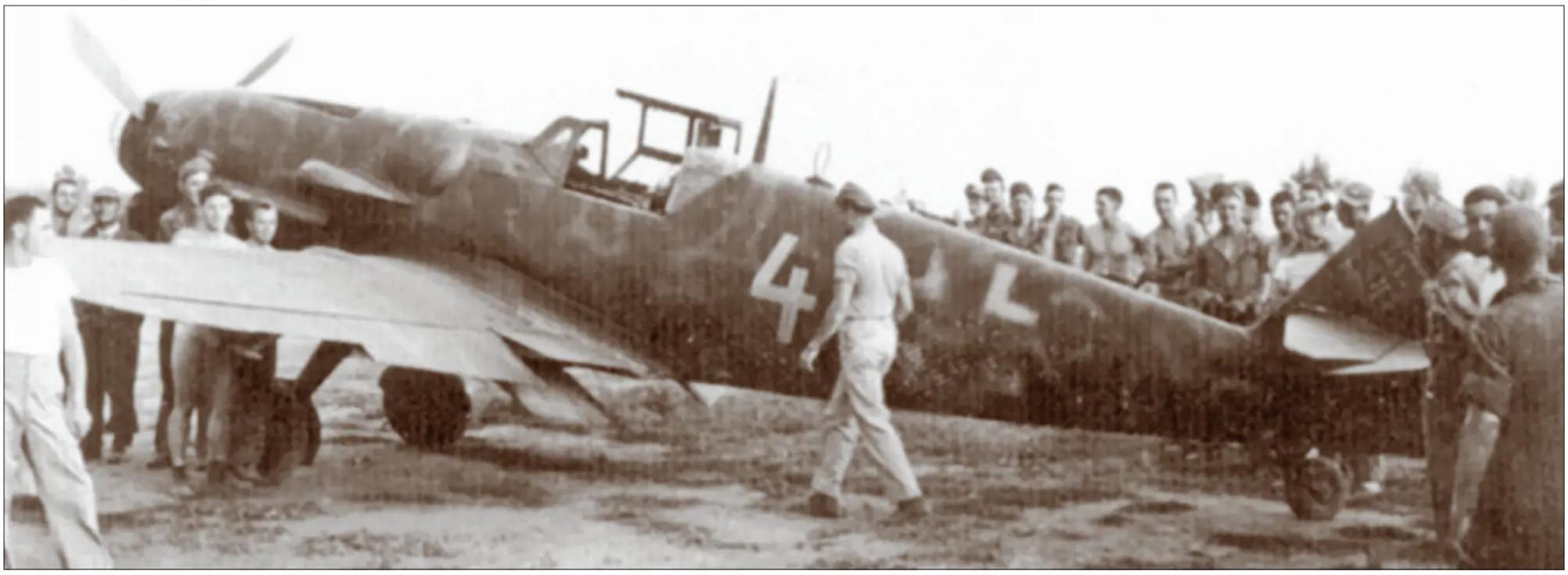
Photography by Greg Morehead

VINTAGE FLYING MACHINES
FLYING MUSEUM

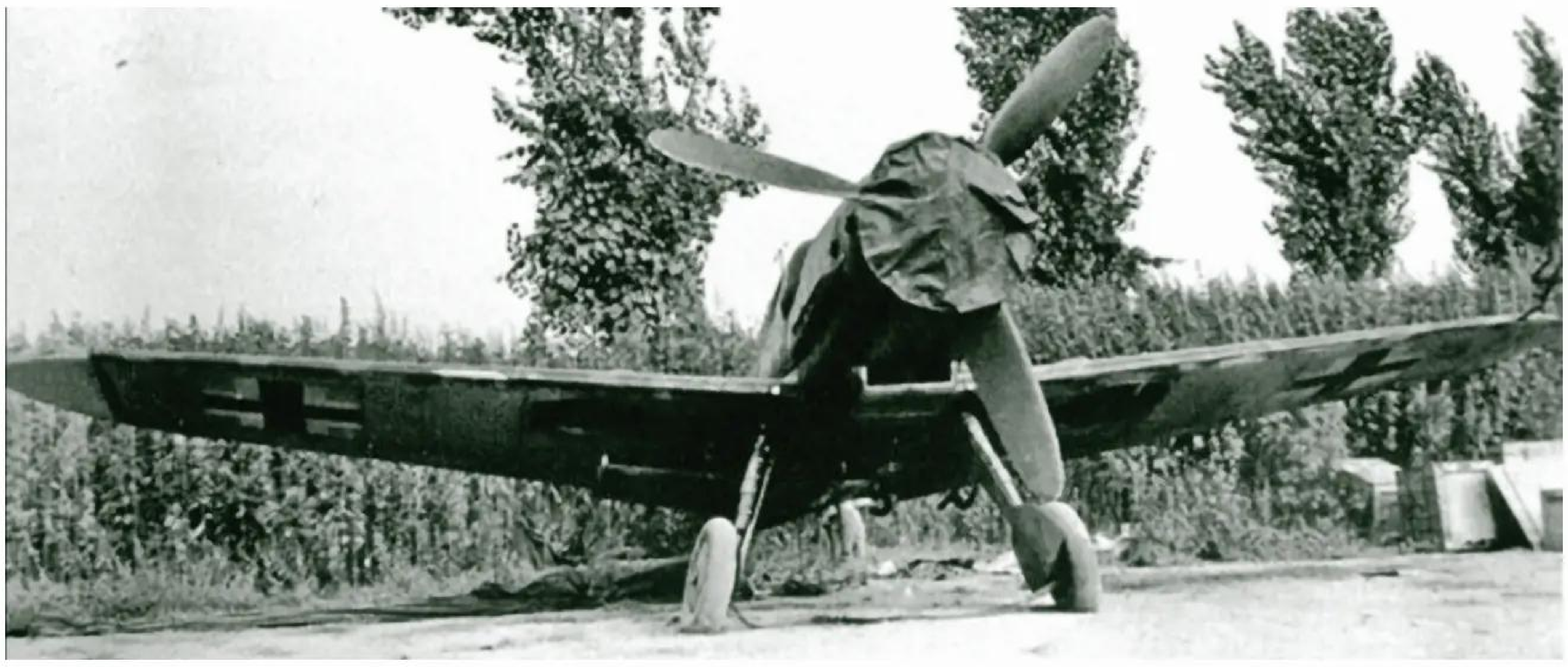
CONTACT VINTAGE FLYING MACHINES FOR FULL DETAILS!

www.dc3experience.com

(continued from page 16)



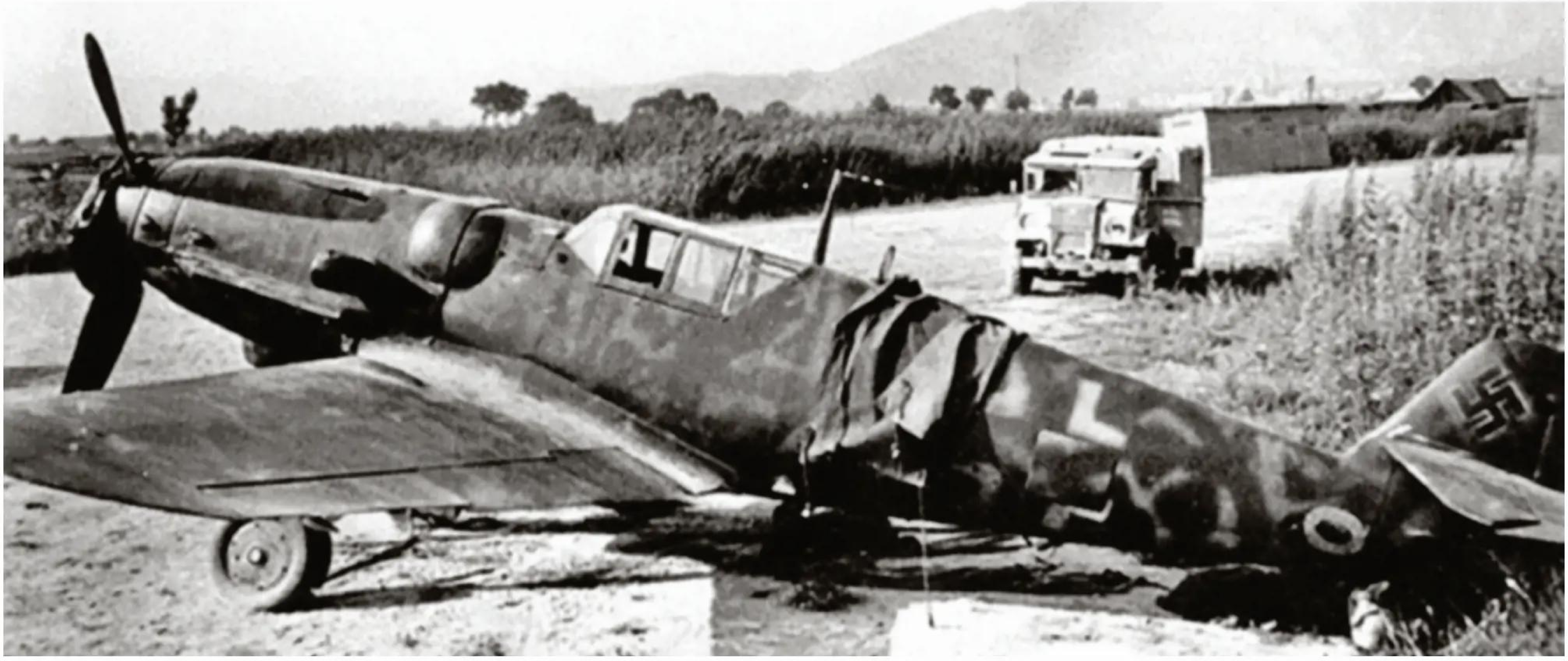
The fighter shortly after its unexpected arrival as men of the 72nd swarm around the plane.



Almost as soon as it landed, the men of the 72nd pushed the Messerschmitt to the edge of the airstrip where it would be partially obscured by vegetation and they then threw a canvas cover over the brightly painted spinner.

to serve as a Reich defense unit against the increasing bombing attacks. After a few days of waiting, he found that he had been assigned on temporary duty to *JG 4*. By this point, D-Day had taken place and even though there were months of hard fighting to come, it was now obvious that Germany was losing the war. Darbois, like many of his fellow Frenchmen, had surrender on his mind. But how to get safely to American lines without being killed by the Germans or the Allies?

The young Frenchman spent his evenings secretly plotting his escape and he knew his best chance would be during the upcoming formation flight. On 25 July, the massed group of Messerschmitts launched from Maniago and the Italian countryside was soon reverberating with the massed sound of the inverted DB V-12s. The flight consisted of 16 Bf 109s broken down into 14 G-6 single-seaters and two of the relatively rare two-seat dual-control G-12s. Prior to takeoff, Darbois had been assigned a G-12 and he did not like this because the plane had a shorter range and did not have an oxygen system. In a bit of luck, another pilot asked him if he wished to fly a G-6 and Darbois accepted. He was then assigned to fly the CO's plane, which was coded *Red 1*. That aircraft had a mechanical problem and he was told to take G-6/R3 WNr 160756 *Yellow 4*. After takeoff, Darbois indicated by hand to his flight leader (they were flying under radio

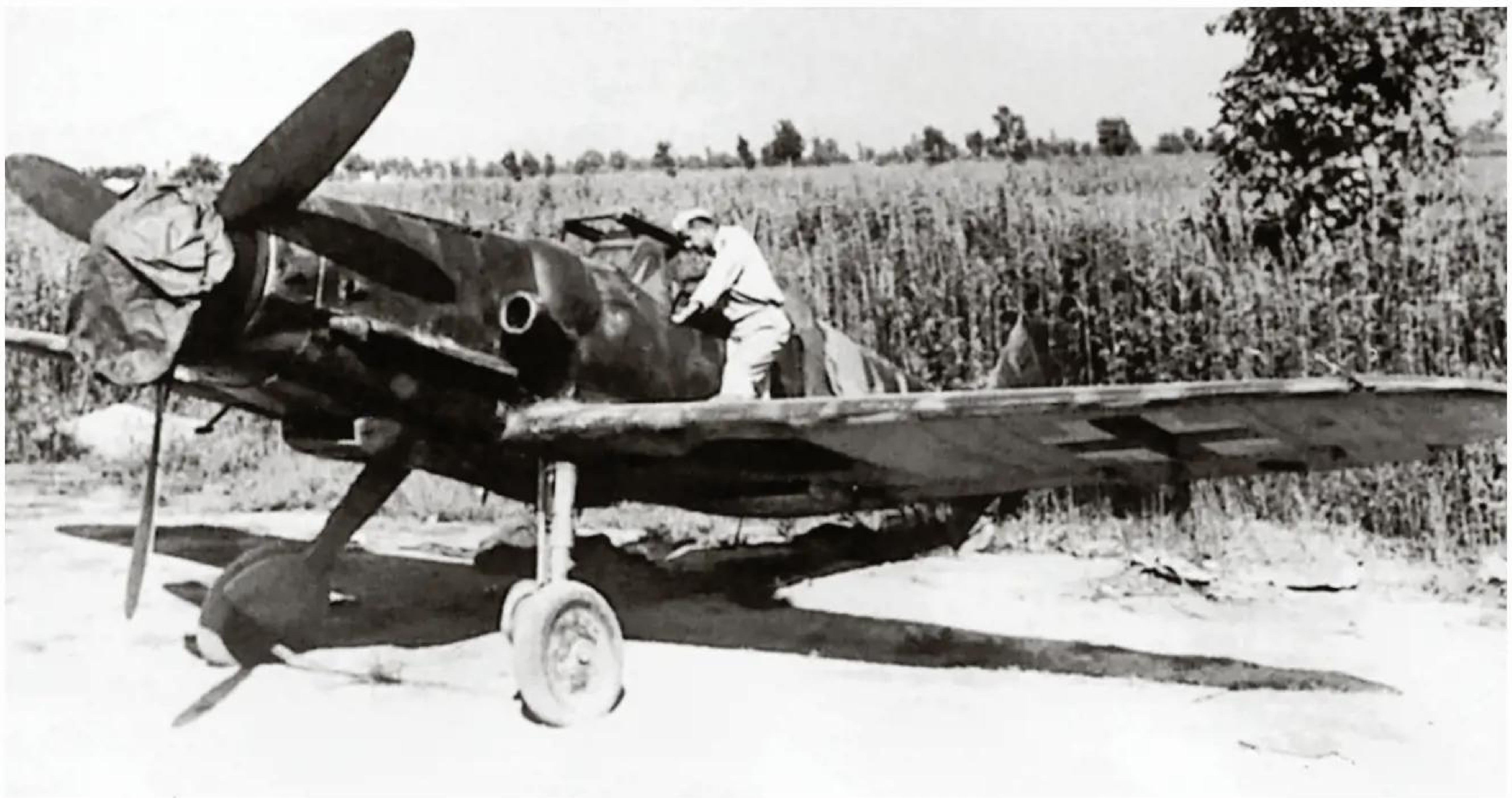


This high-angle view shows to advantage the partial overpainting of the national insignia as well as the toned-down *swastika*. It appears that the fuselage iron crosses were soft-sprayed compared to the hard edges of the restoration.

silence) that he was having trouble with the engine and that it was running rough and cutting in and out.

The flight leader indicated for Darbois to divert to an airfield north of Venice where German mechanics could examined the engine. Pulling up and out in a gentle left turn, he watched as the remaining fighters receded into the distance. However, as was the practice, he was escorted by another G-6 to make sure that he landed safely. Nearing the field at Treviso, he indicated to the other pilot that he had the field in sight and that aircraft returned to the formation. Once he was sure they could not see him, he pushed the nose down, shoved the throttle all the way forward and followed the Italian coast. When he knew he was not being followed, he began the climb to altitude where his fuel consumption would be lower. He then found that the oxygen masks had been removed by the ground crew since the formation was not going to any great height. He forced himself to 20,000-ft where he found it difficult to breath so he managed to loosen the inlet tube on the oxygen tanks and use it to get some vital oxygen. The weather was not being particularly cooperative and a heavy cloud cover was beginning to form. The Frenchman had mapped out his flight to reach the coastal town of Pescara. At this point, he would turn his fighter west and head for Rome to land at one of the many Allied airfields surrounding that city.

However, Darbois, not that experienced of a pilot for this type of long-distance flying, became lost in the increasingly poor weather. He actually headed southwest instead of west and was crossing Italy and inadvertently flying towards Naples rather than Rome. His fuel was running low when he spotted an airstrip at Santa Maria Capua Vetere. He could see a number of Olive Drab aircraft parked around the landing strip with American insignia so he dropped his gear and flaps and came in for landing. The field was home to the 72nd Liaison Squadron and the pilots and crews of the unit's Piper L-4s and Stinson L-5s were more than surprised when a fully-armed Messerschmitt touched down with a rooster-tail of dust and dirt. Americans grabbed their carbines and Colt .45s, jumped into jeeps, and quickly surrounded the enemy fighter. (NOTE: Later research revealed that the tower operator was Pvt. John F. Davis III and he recognized the plane as German but saw that its gear and flaps were down so he flashed the plane an "all clear" to land. Squadron CO Maj. James Percy questioned the French pilot who apparently told him that he defected with three other pilots but that they disappeared in the bad weather. We have not been able to find any confirmation regarding these additional aircraft.) Worried about reprisals against his family, Darbois asked that the markings on the Messerchmitt be painted over. Percy did not do that but he had canvas sheets thrown over the aircraft. Percy also classified Darbois as a deserter.


An officer of the 72nd checks out the Messerschmitt's cockpit. Note how the dappled camouflage extended over the wing leading edge.

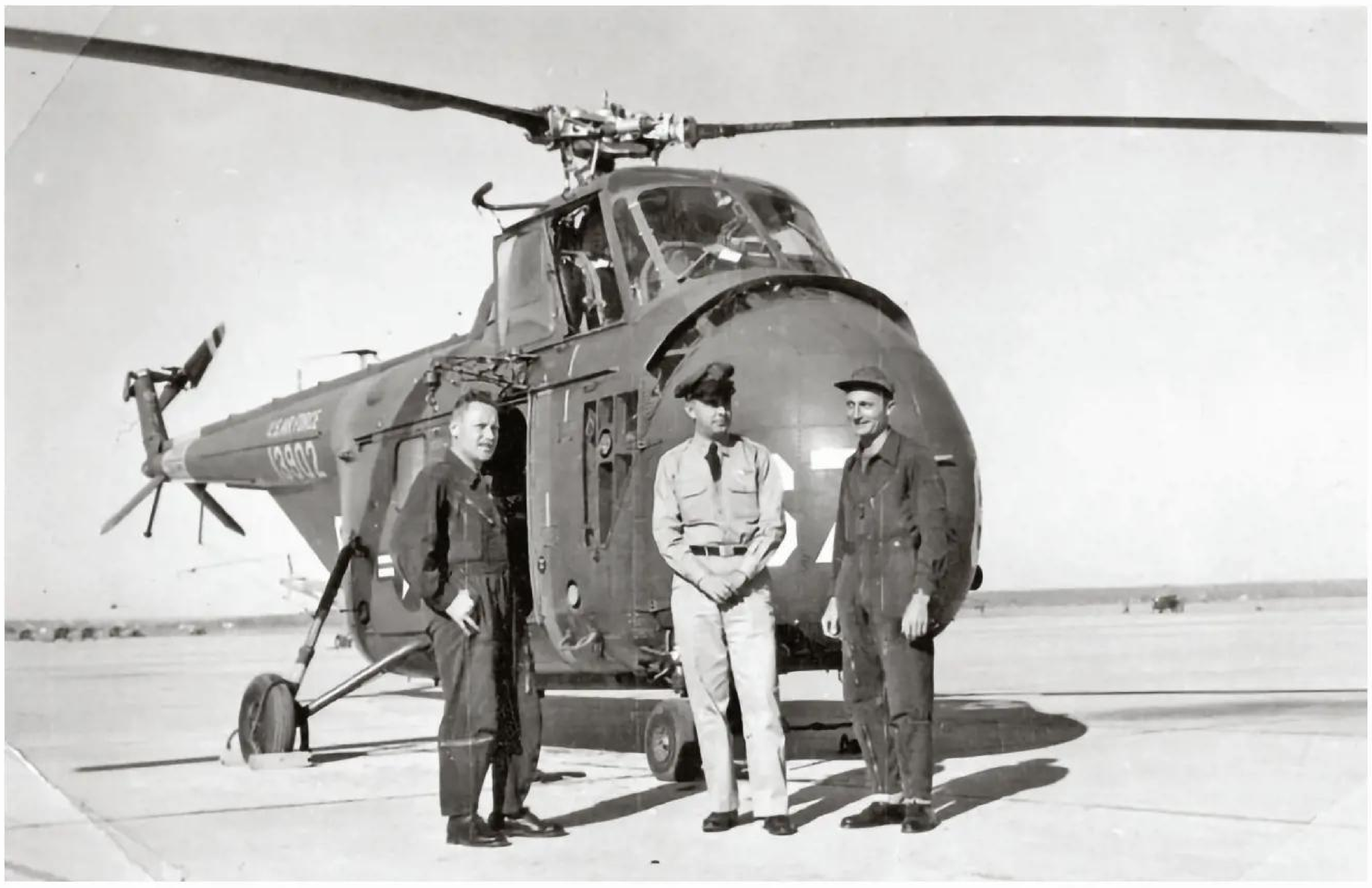
As a Free French Air For e pilot, Darbois flew combat patrols over Germany.

It was obvious that the pilot wanted to surrender. After being briefly interrogated, he was shipped off to Rome for a period of imprisonment and more questioning but he was then released and given over to the French who allowed him join the Free French Air Force.

But what to do with a very nice, fully-armed Mersserschmitt? In a touch of humor, someone in the 72nd had stenciled the following under the 109's windscreen:

With the end war, Darbois made the decision to stay in the *Armee de l'Air*.

Darbois became a pilot with the French aerobatic team flying Stampe SV.4 biplanes.



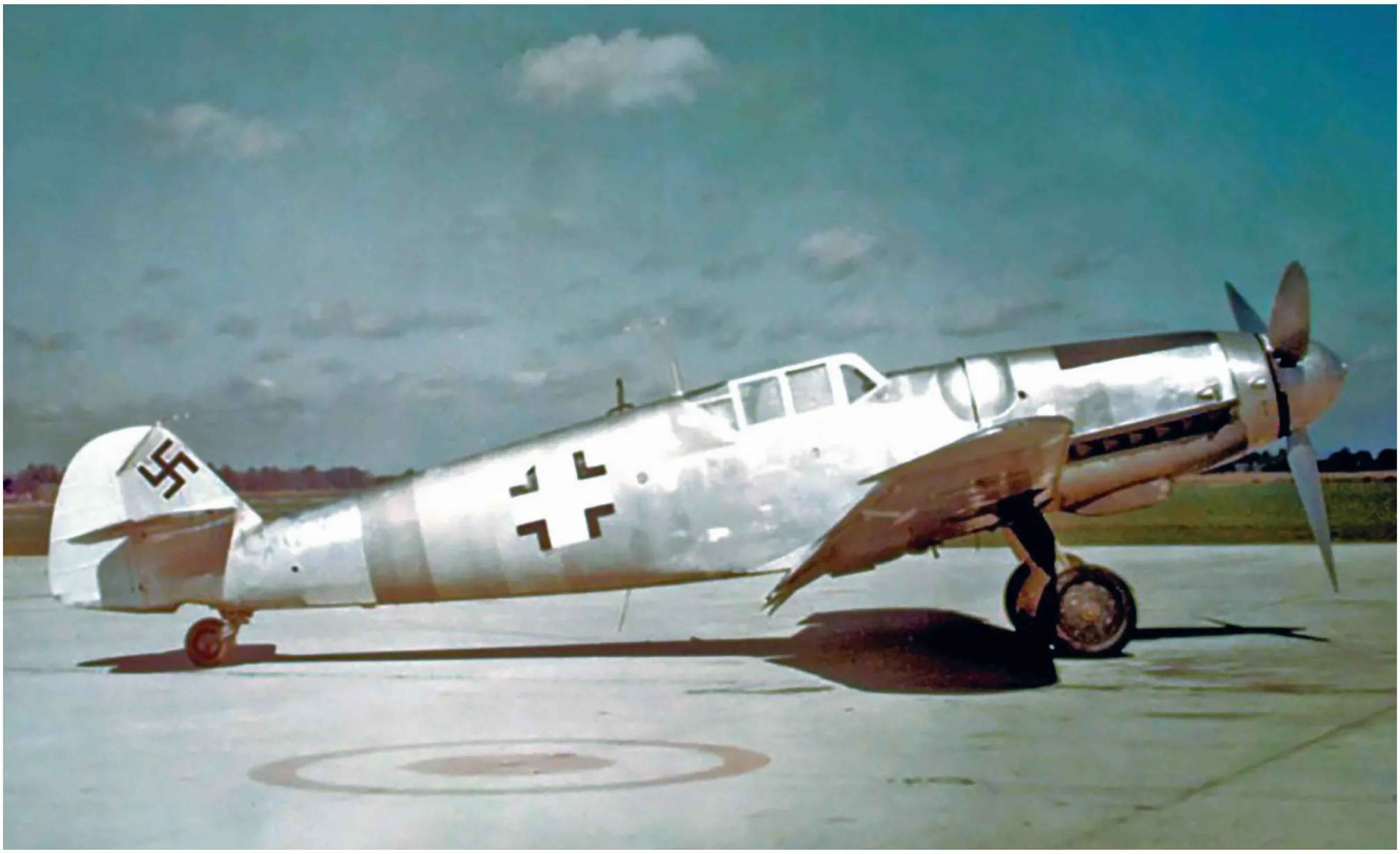
Rene Darbois (on the right) was sent to the USA to learn how to fly H-19 helicopters. He then flew that type of helicopter in Indochina where he saw considerable combat.

"CAPTURED BY 72nd LIAISON SQDN. JUL 25 1944." The Allies already had a number of 109s that had been captured but since this was such a perfect example orders were issued that the plane would be shipped back to the USA for evaluation. Assigned the Foreign Evaluation (FE) number of 496, the fighter made an initial appearance at Wright Field and it is thought that this is where all the original paint was stripped.

In its bare metal finish with some German crosses and FE-496 (later changed to T2-496) painted on the fuselage, the Bf 109G was then flown to Freeman Field in Indiana. This large and remote field was the testing ground for many captured enemy aircraft. We do not know how much the aircraft was flown and have not been able to find an aerial photo of FE-496.

With the end of the war came the decision not to scrap FE-496 but rather to set it aside for preservation for a new National Air Museum that would be part of the Smithsonian Institution. The Messerschmitt was then either flown or disassembled and trucked to the Orchard Place Airport near Chicago where it was put into safe storage inside the huge facility that had been previously utilized for building the Douglas C-54.

Packed away with dozens of other aeronautical rarities, plans for the National Air Museum did not come to any form of fruition. With the Korean War, it was deemed that the space inside the former Douglas facility was needed for other tasks (it really wasn't) and the historic aircraft were ejected from the safety of indoor storage. Unfortunately, it was at this point that many of the artifacts were



The fighter at Freeman Field where it was being test flown. As can be seen, the metal finish was highly polished.

simply scrapped.

Somehow, the bare metal Messerschmitt survived and was transferred to the Silver Hill Storage Facility at Suitland, Maryland. As many *Air Classics* readers know, the majority of the historic airframes were improperly stored and numerous examples were parked outside in very poor weather conditions but it seems the Bf 109G was kept indoors.

When plans came together to finally make a permanent National Air Museum, now called the National Air and Space Museum (NASM), on the National Mall in downtown Washington DC, the decision was made to pull the 109 from storage and restore the aircraft. A major problem developed when the NASM discovered the aircraft's data plate had removed and that they were not sure of the plane's original history.

The NASM decided to restore the plane in the paint scheme of Bf 109G-6 WNr 160163 that flew with *JG 27* as *White 2*. When this was done, the completed aircraft was hailed worldwide as the "ultimate WWII aircraft restoration." Of course, it wasn't although it looked very nice. The Messerschmitt soon became one of the most admired aircraft on display when the museum opened its doors on 1 July 1976.

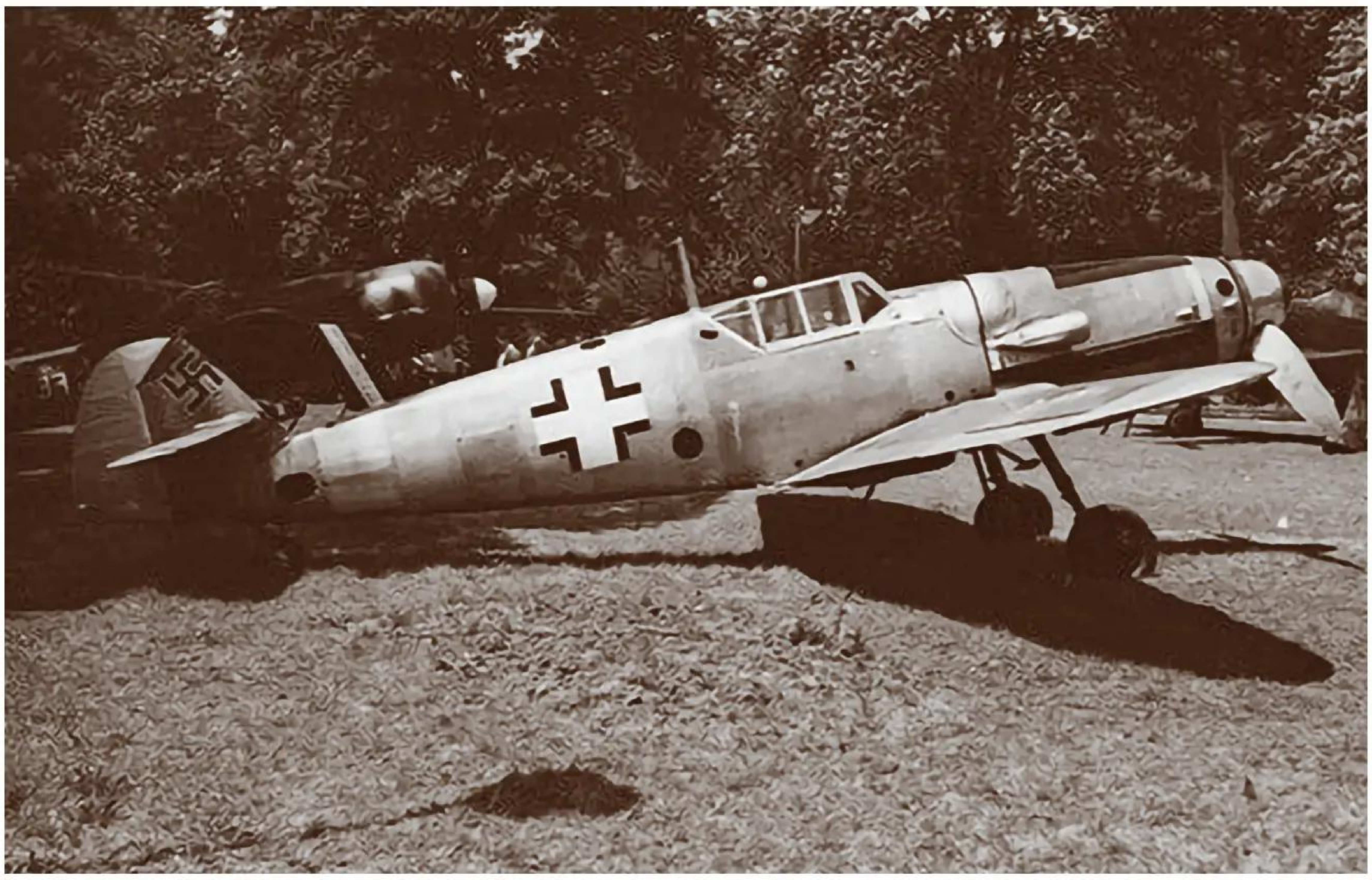
In 2019, NASM closed for renovation and to repair structural defects in the building. The Messerschmitt was transferred to the magnificent Udvar-Hazy facility and during basically a half-century a lot of research had uncovered factual material on the 109G, including discovery of its original WNr. Using original photos, it was decided to repaint the plane in the camouflage and markings that it carried when Darbois flew it to the airfield occupied by the 72nd Liaison Squadron. As can be seen, this has been done and the Bf 109G will certainly take pride of place when the aircraft goes on display in 2026 in the new Jay I. Kislak WWII in the Air Gallery.

And what of Rene Darbois? His request to join the Free French Air Force was finally granted but he spent some time in Naples waiting for his transfer orders. While there, his loyalty to France was questioned by his new companions. He was shipped out to Algeria for flight training and given the new last name of Guyot to protect his family. He trained in Supermarine Spitfires and was sent to a combat unit and flew several combat patrols over Germany before the end of the war.

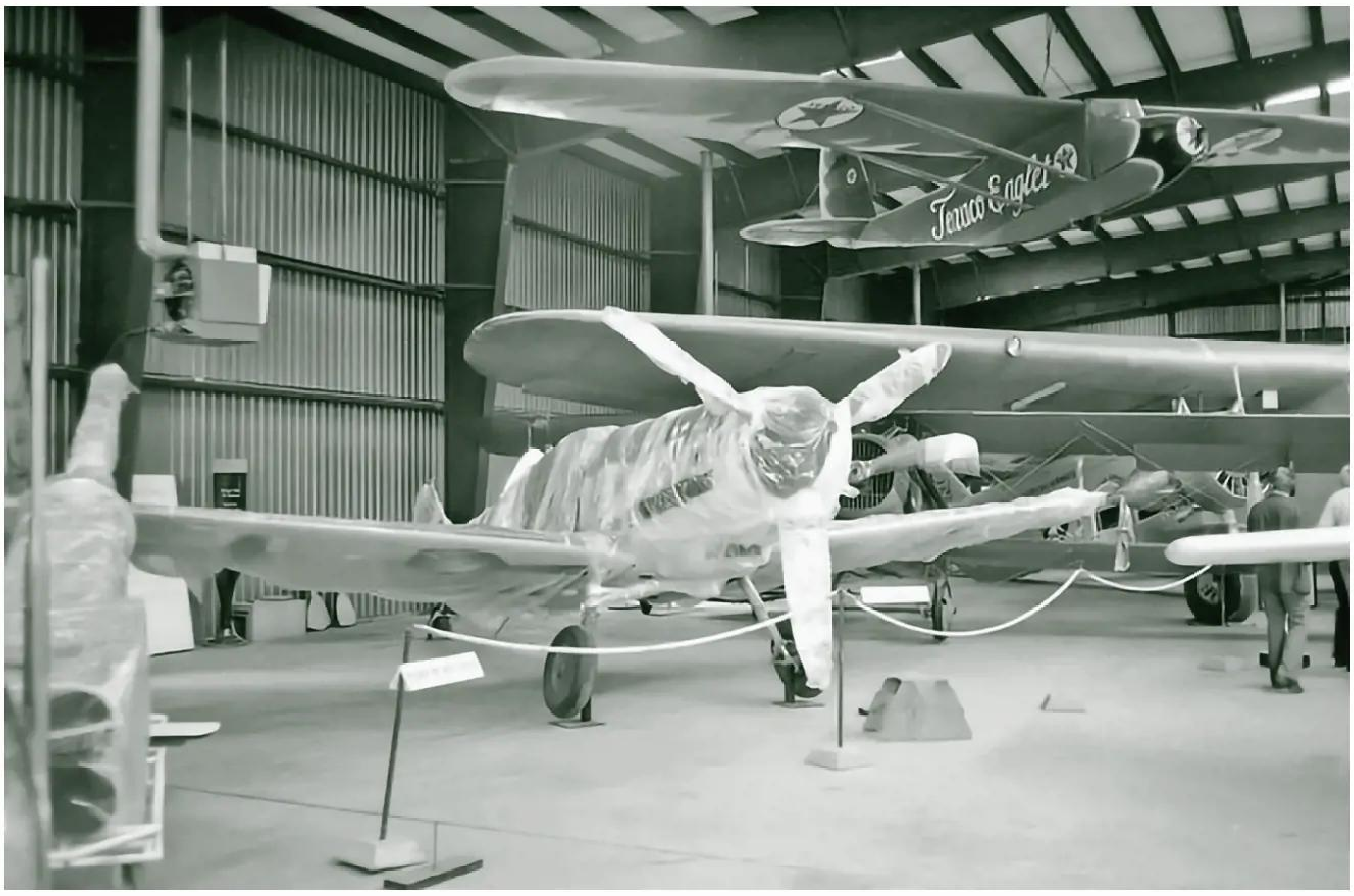
With the end of the conflict, Darbois reverted to his real name and made the decision to stay in the military. He became a flight instructor and became part of the precision flying team *Patrouille d'Etampes*, flying Stampe SV.4 biplanes. The end of WWII saw conflicts break out in numerous French colonies that demanded independence. Such a conflict started in Indochina during 1946 and brutal fighting took place between the French and the native inhabitants.

In 1953, Darbois was shipped to Gary AFB in San Marcos, Texas, where he undertook helicopter instruction and began flying Sikorsky H-19s. After training was completed, he was shipped to Saigon where he joined a combat helicopter unit and helped relieve the French fort at Dien Bien Phu. Darbois flew constantly — taking in new troops, pulling out the wounded and dead. The never-ending missions began to take a toll on his health. On 7 May 1954 — one of the blackest days in French history when Dien Bien Phu fell to communist Vietnamese forces — Darbois would pull out 185 wounded soldiers while under heavy fire. It was an act of extreme heroism. He would keep flying combat missions until a ceasefire was declared later in 1954.

At the end of year, in a weakened state from tropical diseases and weight loss, he headed back to France to rejoin his wife and daughter. Once back home, his friends and family said he was a changed man — moody, withdrawn, and not caring about the several important medals that had just been awarded to him. His physical condition did not really improve. On 14 February 1955, according to newspaper reports, he closed the door to a room in his house, put his service pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. Rene Darbois was 31-years-old. **AC**

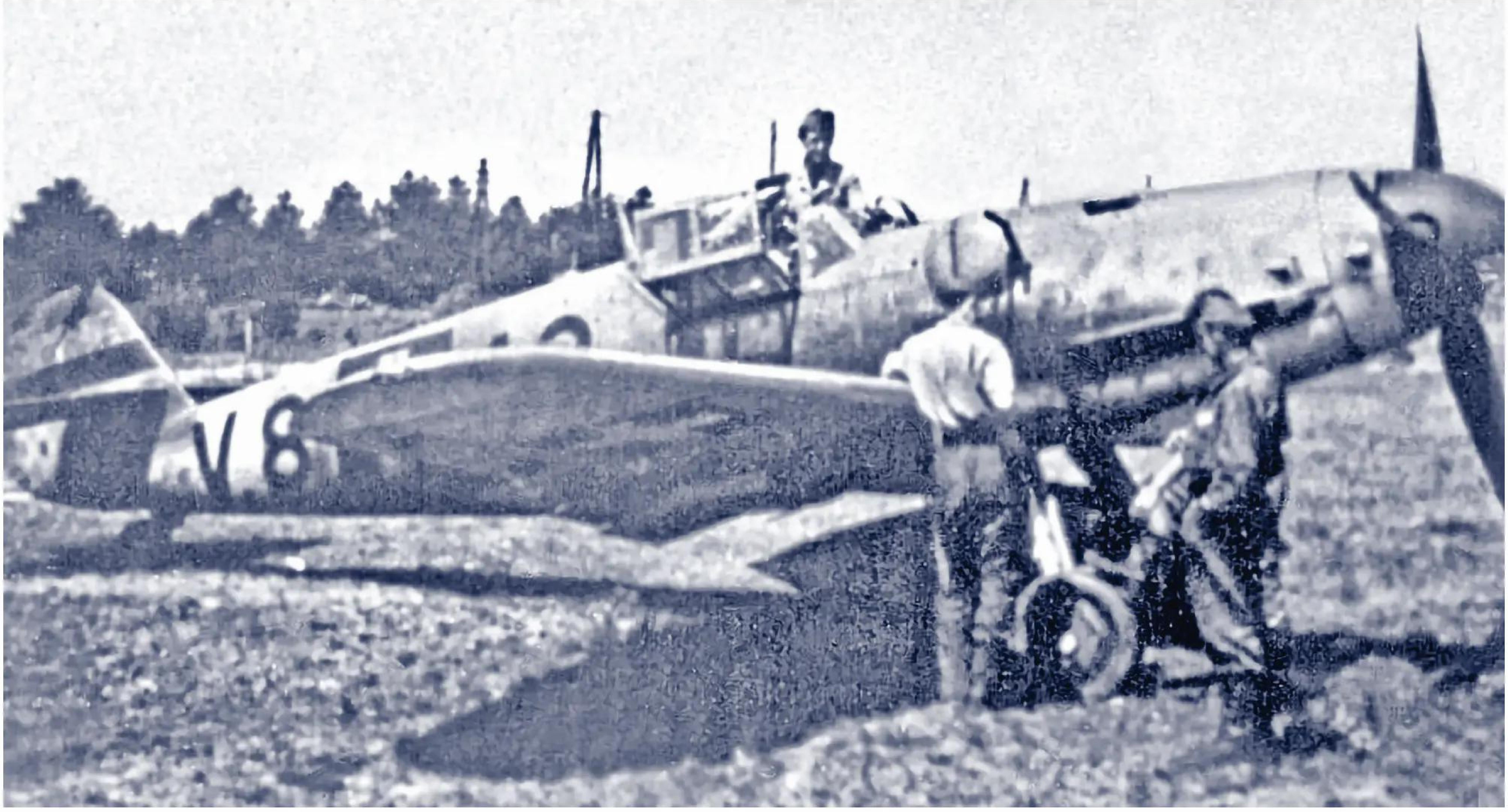


The Bf 109G during some sort of post-war victory display and before it was transferred to Chicago for storage.



The *Gustav* in long-term storage at Silver Hill.

(continued from page 44)



Hungarian pilots watch the cowl being closed up on a Bf 109G-6/R6. For the most part, the Hungarians retained the factory camouflage on the G series aircraft but there were exceptions.

The Germans realized the importance of the Hungarians as an ally in attempting to stop the devasting 15th AF bombing raids and kept the RHAF supplied with as many aircraft as could be spared. This view shows an earlier Bf 109F in apparently just-delivered condition.

capital, he had his first encounter with the 82nd FG, which was escorting some B-24s attacking the city. His squadron had failed to locate any of the American aircraft where their controller directed them, and its pilots were in the process of landing back at their base to refuel. Most of them, including Corp. Faludi, were in their landing pattern when bombs began raining down on the airfield. He firewalled his throttle and desperately attempted to regain some altitude.

As Faludi climbed — and his red fuel warning light blinked off and on — he was attacked by some P-38s. He opened fire on one of them and then foolishly followed it, alone, as it dove

The Pumas sometimes worked in conjunction with RHAF Me 210s in attacking 15th AF bomber formations.

A late model Puma Bf 109G fitted with the much improved "Galland hood" taxis to a camouflaged parking position.

away. His Bf 109 was immediately hit by another Lightning and began to burn. As he exited the flaming Messerschmitt, he felt a sharp blow to his left leg. His parachute then opened and he floated to earth. A nasty wound in his calf would keep Faludi in hospital for the next two and a half months. Many years later he was able to determine that the pilot who shot him down was 1st Lt. Orson D. Osborne of the 95th FS, for his third victory. Osborne later recalled this encounter:

> *"Some of the bombers were early and some late, so we just patrolled the target area. An Me 109 came down on a flight by my side, so I turned into him. He split-essed and I followed him down. I started hitting him and getting closer all the time. Finally, I got so close I had to pull away. My flight had followed me down and they saw the pilot bail out. It was right over Budapest."*

Although his leg was far from healed, Faludi insisted on joining his new unit, the 101/2 Fighter Squadron, and flew his next combat mission with it on 26 June. (The new Home Defense Fighter Group 101 had been formed from the old 5/I "Puma" Group, of which the 2/1 Squadron was a part, in May.) He was credited with shooting down a B-24 near Budapest on 2 July.

The new Puma Group was based at Veszprém, and its pilots were billeted at Balatonalmádi, four miles from its airfield on Lake Balaton's northern shore. There they could sleep relatively undisturbed by the Royal Air Force's frequent night bombing of Veszprém.

On the morning of 7 July, as usual, the Puma pilots were transported from

Twin brothers Jack (on the left) and Robert Joley were both 95th FS pilots (note the Squadron's "Mr. Bones/Grim Reaper" skeleton insignia on both of their A-2 jackets). Bob was tragically killed on 13 April 1944 when he was forced to bail out of a P-38 during a test flight from Foggia #11 and struck its horizontal stabilizer. Jack completed his combat tour and was credited with four confirmed kills, including a Bf 109 on 7 July.

Pilot relaxes with a Bf 109G-10/U4. Note the row of Fw 190s in the background.

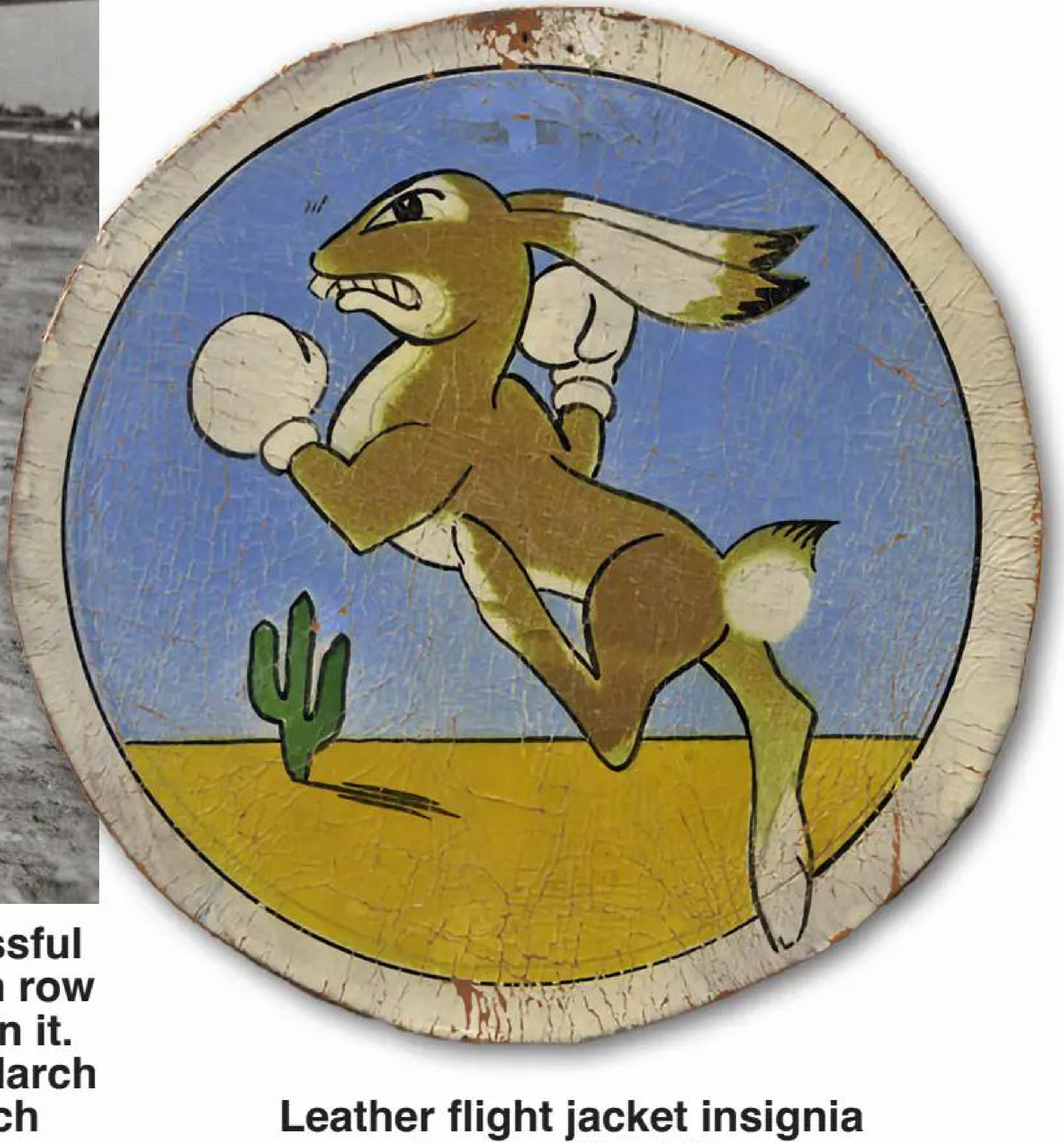
15th Air Force B-24M-1-FO 44-50443 *Lo An Roy* of the 727th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, dropping bombs on Muhldorf, Germany, on 19 March 1945. The aircraft survived the war and was flown to storage at Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, were it was scrapped on 20 December 1945.

Close-up view of a Puma pilot and his ground crew shows the small unit insignia to advantage.

Balatonalmádi to the Veszprém airfield, where they had breakfast and then waited to be scrambled to intercept American raiders. On this day, Károly Faludi was assigned as wingman to the 39-year-old Group Commander, Lt. Col. Aladár Heppes. After breakfast, Corp. Faludi walked over to the Group Headquarters area with his flight gear; his assigned Bf 109G-6 was already parked there when he arrived. (This plane displayed the code V.8 and 35 on either side of its fuselage, V.8 referring to a particular batch of Messerschmitts built under license in Hungary earlier that year.)

The 1st Squadron area was just north of Headquarters in a forest bordering the east side of the runway. The 2nd Squadron area was just south of Headquarters, and the 3rd Squadron's was in another forest on the opposite side of the airfield. Their aircraft were dispersed in U-shaped revetments among the trees to protect them from the Allied bombings. Loudspeakers were installed in the

These 82nd FG pilots were photographed shortly after returning from a successful B-17 escort to Steyr, Austria, on 26 March 1944. First (on the left) in the bottom row is 1st Lt. Orson Osborne, who scored the second of his three aerial victories on it. His third, over Hungary on 13 April, was Corp. Károly Faludi's Bf 109. The 26 March mission was one of the Group's first with its new P-38J model Lightnings, which had begun arriving in Italy earlier that month.



Leather flight jacket insignia for the 96th FS.

Hit by attacking Puma Messerschmitts, a 15th AF Liberator, its number 2 engine badly smoking, drops out of formation.

Roy Harman, Charles Walker's flight and element leader on the 7 July mission, had received a Purple Heart from Brig. Gen. Dean Strother, CO of the 82nd FG's parent 306th Fighter Wing, on 27 June. The day before, Lt. Harman had been slightly wounded by shrapnel and shards of glass from two 20mm cannon shell hits in his P-38's cockpit during a B-24 escort to Vienna.

Twenty-one-year-old Károly Faludi posing with his 2/1 Squadron's Bf 109G-6 Black 10 (V.8+10) at Ferihegy Airfield near Budapest in March of 1944. He was shot down and wounded by the 95th FS' Orson Osborne while flying this plane on 13 April.

trees so the pilots at readiness could be immediately informed of developing air raids. Their controllers were based in a cave deep inside a mountain near Budapest.

The fighter pilots at Veszprém were soon informed that USAAF bombers had been detected to the west, heading north toward the Czech border, which would make them the responsibility of *Luftwaffe* fighter units based in eastern Austria and Czechoslovakia. The Puma pilots would typically be vectored onto bomber formations targeting their own country, and would also intercept enemy planes returning over Hungary from their attacks on other Axis countries.

There were three stages of alerts. The first stage began when the 15th AF planes were spotted forming up over the Adriatic Sea

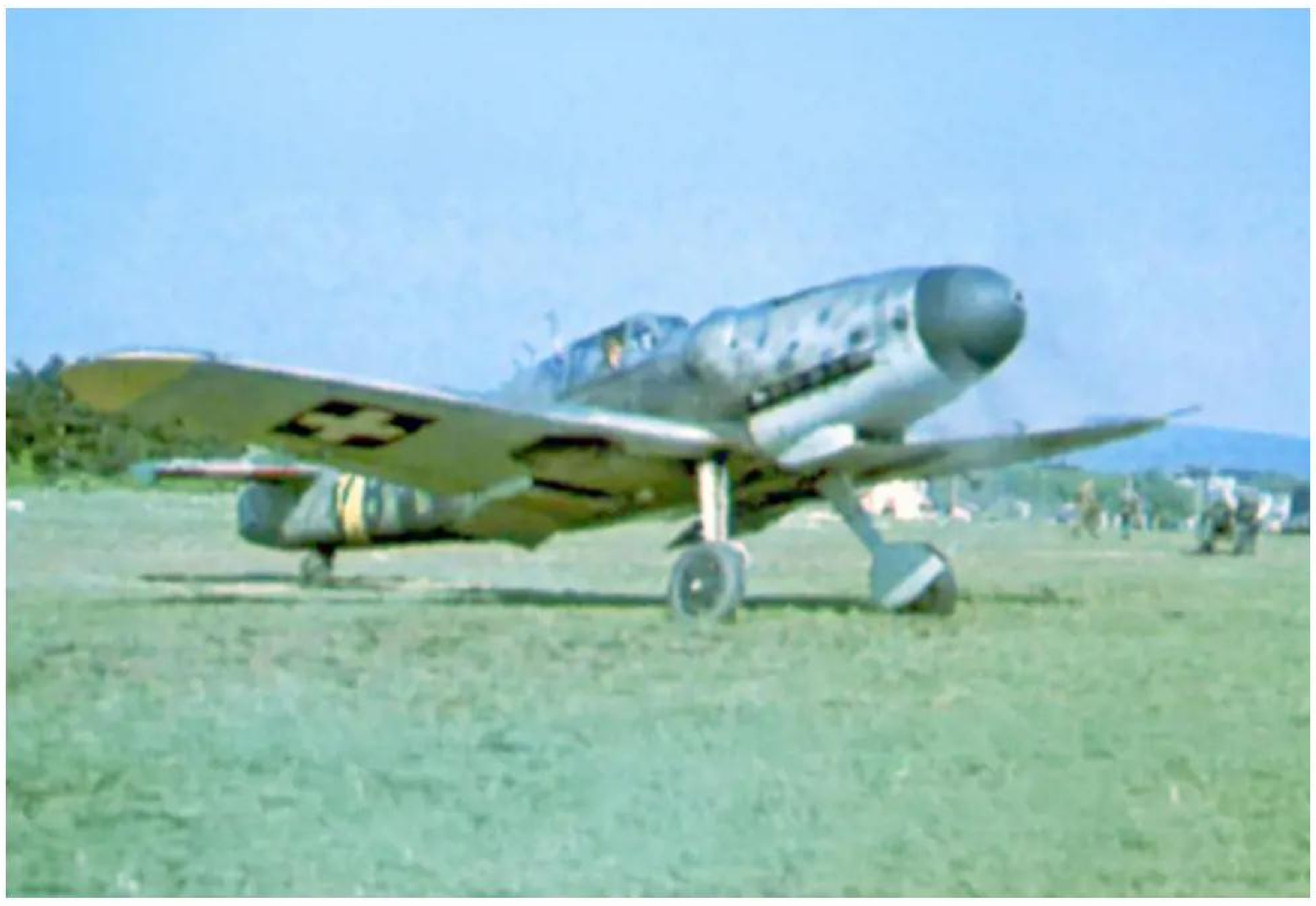
Puma Group Commander Colonel Aladár Heppes in a seemingly pensive mood sometime during that eventful summer of 1944.

Lieutenant Joe Belton who led the whole 82nd Fighter Group at the head of the 95th Fighter Squadron on the 7 July 1944 mission.

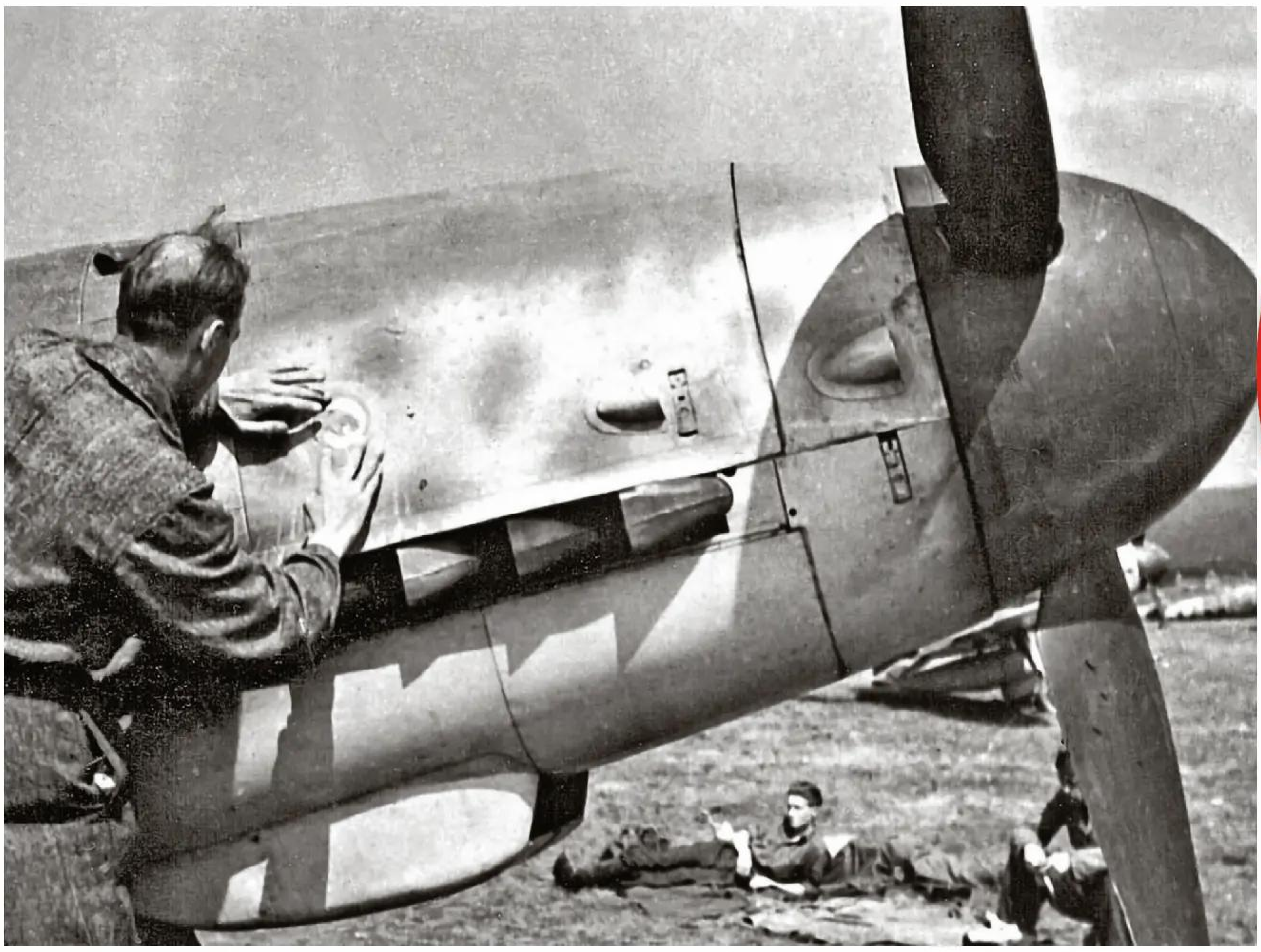
before proceeding north to their targets. The second stage commenced when they crossed Hungary's border with Yugoslavia, at which time the Puma pilots went on 15-minute takeoff notice. By the third, scramble, stage they were in their cockpits awaiting orders to do so.

The takeoff order finally arrived. Col. Heppes led ten Messerchmitts aloft and headed north, directed toward Győr (where, coincidentally, the Hungarian Bf 109s were built), but the action in that area had ceased and no aircraft were spotted there. After circling for a few minutes, the Puma pilots were ordered by their controller to proceed back south, toward Pápa. They had covered about half the distance between those cities and were over the town of Tét when they spotted a dozen P-38s below them. Colonel Heppes — nicknamed "Old Puma" due to his advanced age, for a fighter pilot — gave the order to attack and they made a diving turn to the right,

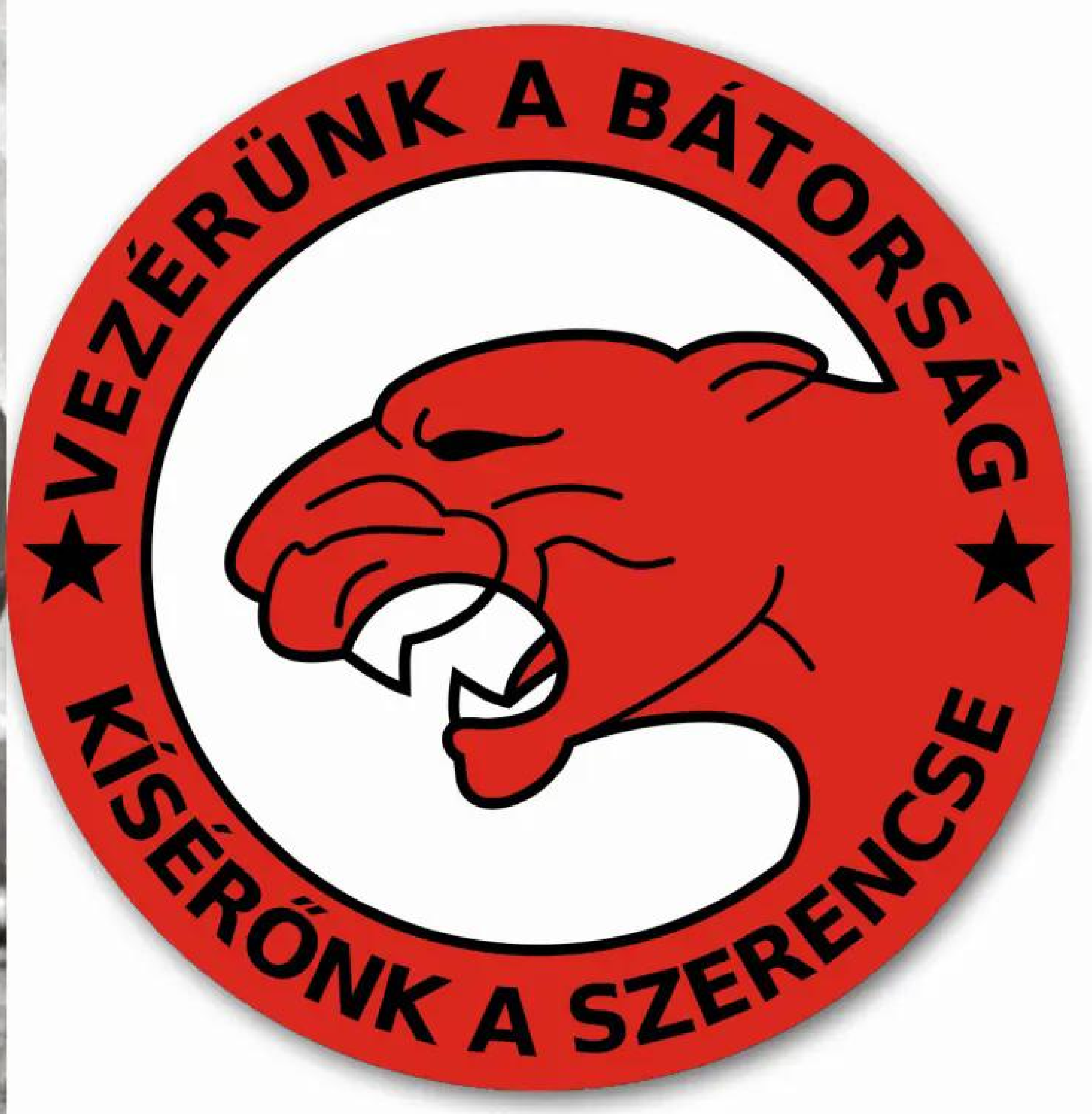
Three Puma pilots (all senior corporals) on alert at Veszprém sometime during July 1944. Left to right: Pál Szikora (101/1 Squadron), Károly Faludi (101/2), and Zoltán Skulka (101/3), who was killed by USAAF bomber gunners on 21 August.



Poor quality but interesting photo of a Puma Messerschmitt Bf 109G beginning its takeoff roll. The image shows the RHAF underwing insignia of a black square with white cross to advantage.



A Puma Group ground crewman places its insignia on the nose of a Bf 109. For the most part, the Puma insignias were relatively small.

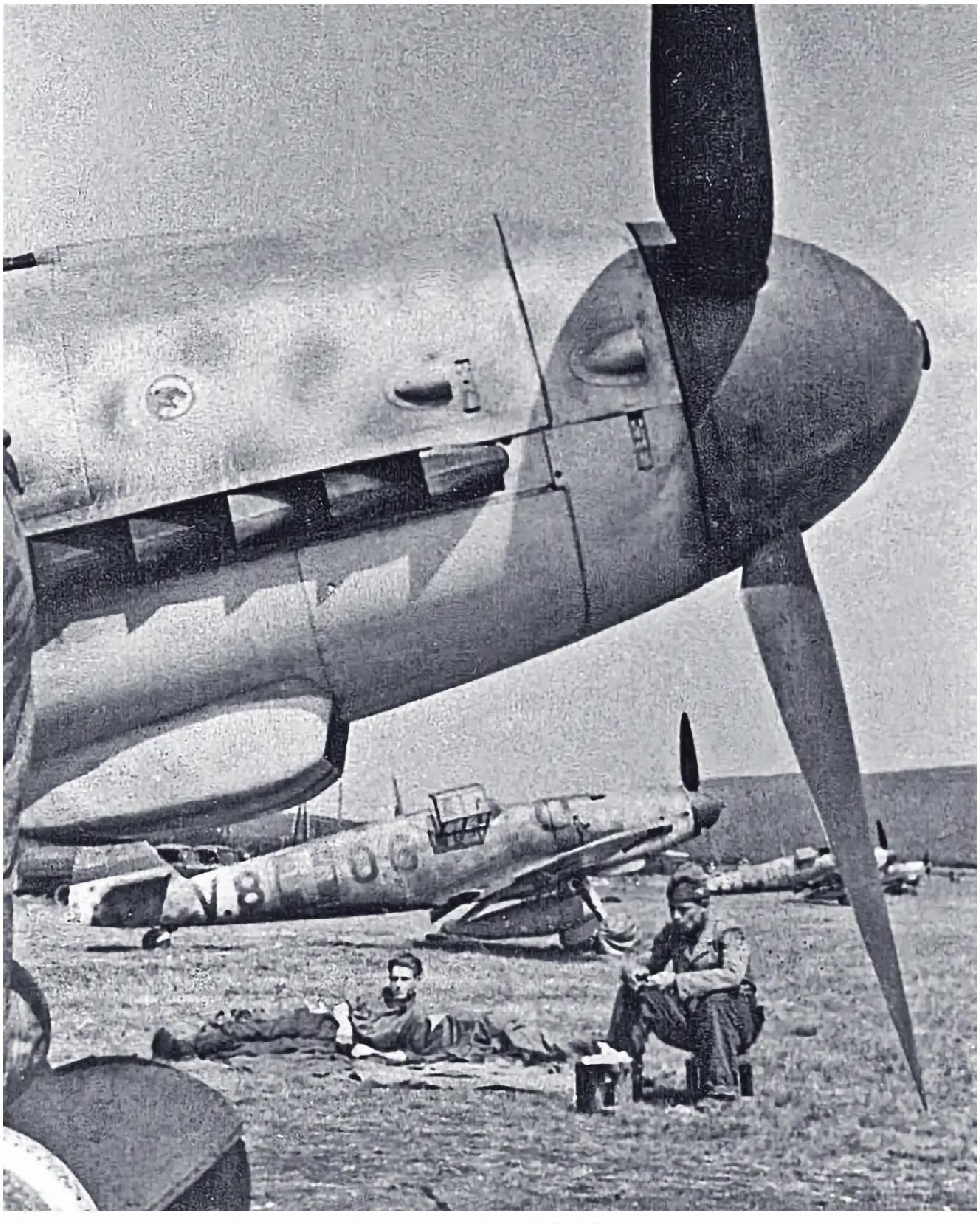


The famed Puma insignia. The Pumas were an elite group, the squadron being comprised of the most experienced Hungarian fighter pilots. Unlike other unit insignia, the red howling Puma head was not attached to a particular unit but to the commander — Aladar Heppes — and it followed him to his new commands.

coming down on the Lightnings at a 30° angle, whereupon the enemy pilots (of the 96th FS) formed a defensive Lufbery circle.

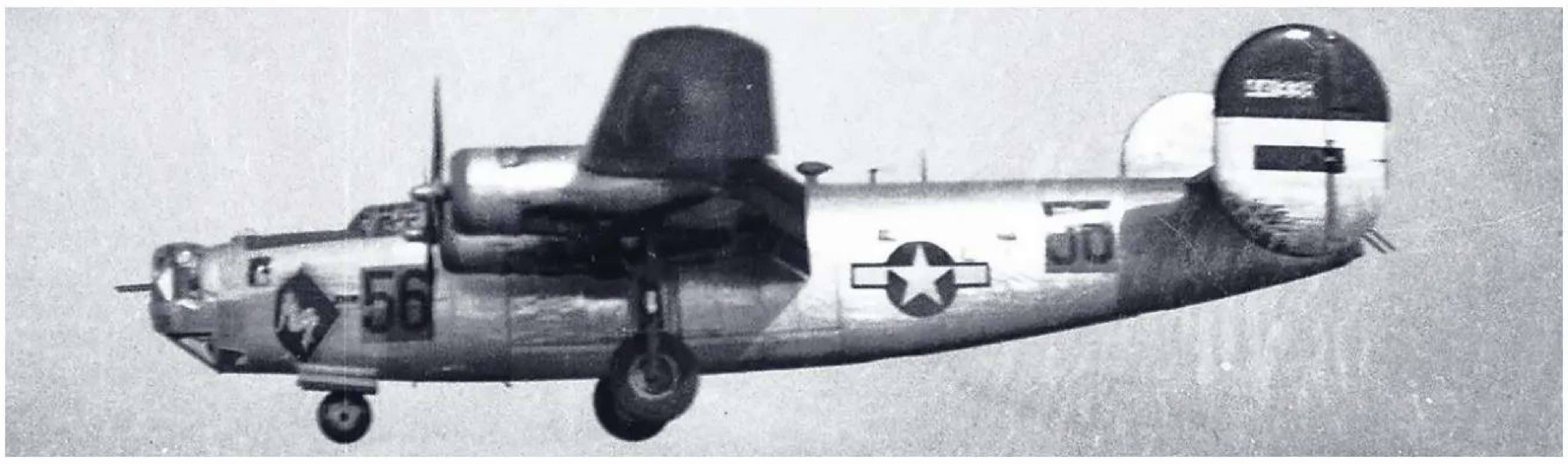
Other P-38s (including the 95th Squadron's) then entered the fray and there were soon more than the Puma pilots could comfortably handle. At one point Corp. Faludi saw Col. Heppes shooting into the P-38 Lufbery, then one of them suddenly appeared between their Bf 109s. Faludi was in perfect position and he gave this Lightning a five- or six-second burst from his two 13mm machine guns to drive it off his leader's tail. He saw strikes on the P-38 (almost certainly Lt. Carroll's), but bullets were also passing perilously close to his own cockpit, so he dove away to his right to escape the fusillade.

As Corp. Faludi then climbed back up to rejoin his flight, he spotted a lone P-38 a mile ahead of and several thousand feet below him, barreling along at a very high speed. The reason for its pilot's haste quickly became apparent: there were three other Bf 109s, led by the 101/1 Squadron's First Officer (second in command), 1st Lt. Pál Irányi — a six-victory ace — pursuing him. Given his advantageous position, Faludi decided to interject himself into the chase. He commenced a steep dive to go after the Lightning, and after pulling up from it his superior speed allowed him to out-distance the

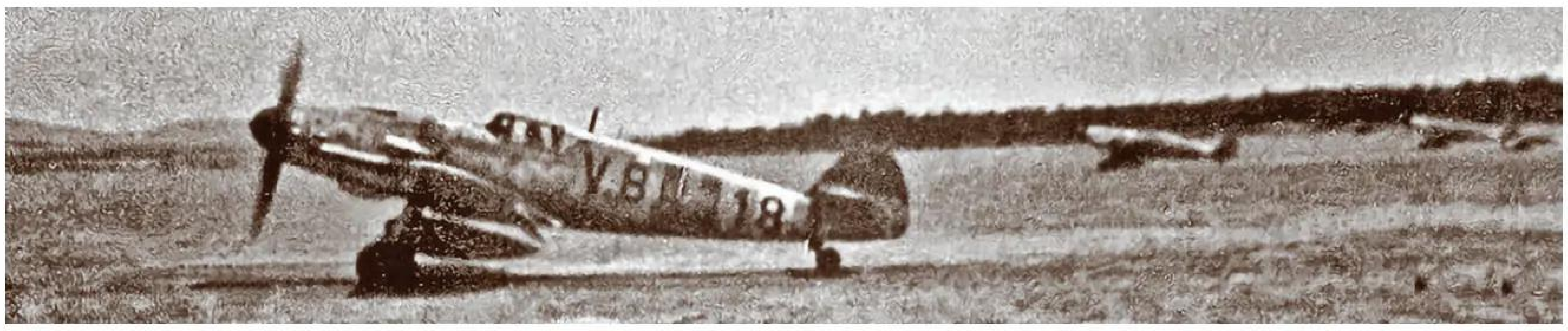


Puma Messerschmitts on alert at Veszprém. V.8+06, in the center, was assigned to the 101/2 Squadron. Note the very small Group insignia just above the exhaust stack of the nearest plane.

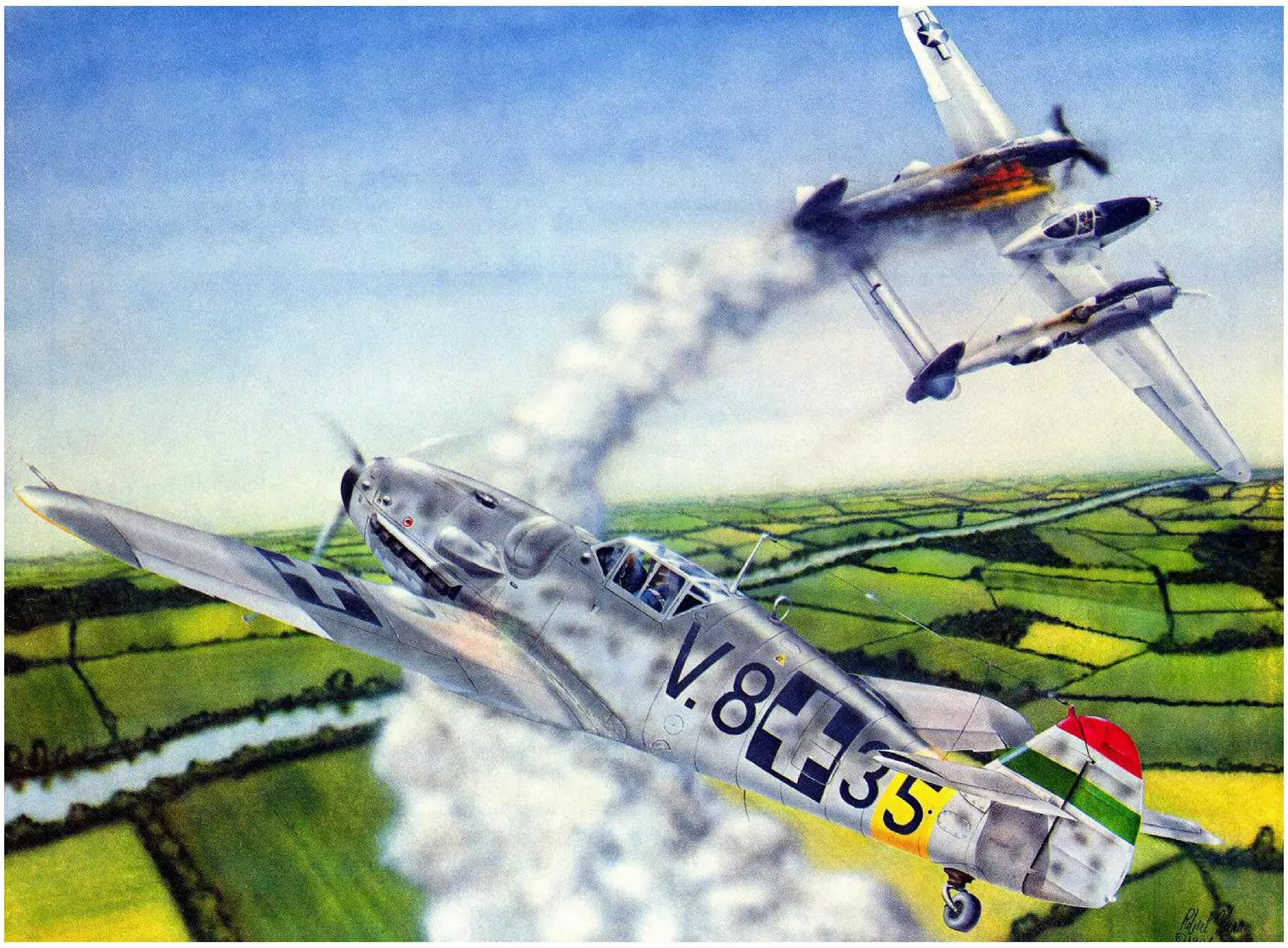
Its pilot (in the cockpit) and two ground crewmen about to start up a Puma Bf 109G for another mission.



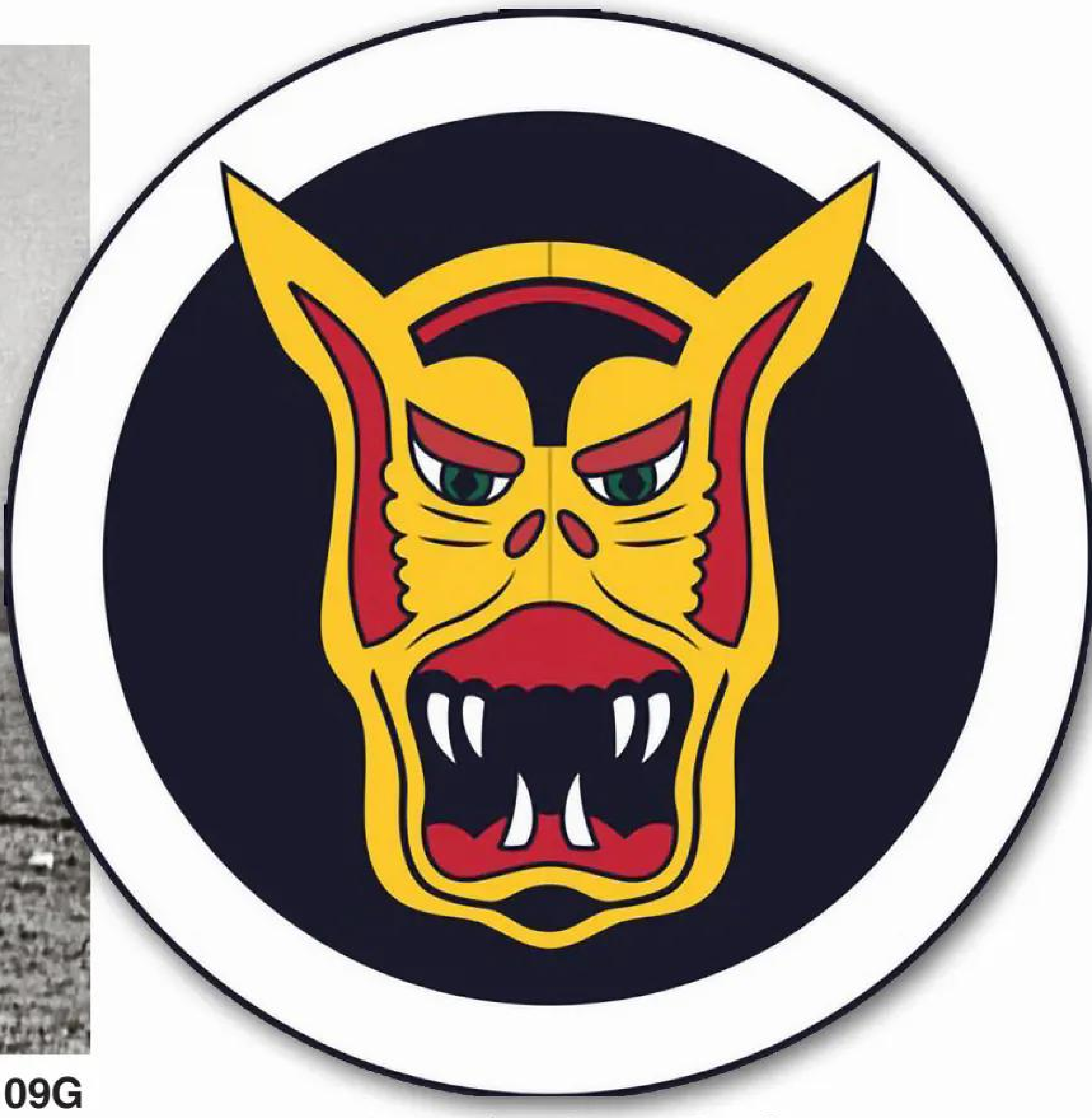
15th AF Liberator returning to Foggia after a mission.



Trio of Pumas takes off from their grass field in a scramble to intercept incoming 15th Air Force bombers. The Hungarians had developed a fairly reliable early warning system to alert them on incoming raids.



This painting by aviation artist Robert Karr depicts the shooting down of 95th FS P-38 pilot Charles Walker by Hungarian Puma pilot Károly Faludi on 7 July 1944. The latter's plane, coded V.8+35, was one of a batch of at least 72 Bf 109G-6s built under license in Hungary during early 1944.



Insignia for the 97th FS.

other Messerschmitts. He was soon within several hundred feet of and below the P-38. Its pilot was evidently watching the other 109s in the distance and had no idea Faludi was in the blind spot beneath his tail. As he moved closer, the Lightning suddenly banked to the left and then to the right, its pilot perhaps finally sensing his presence, although Faludi was able to duplicate these maneuvers in precise unison.

At 50 yards, Corp. Faludi opened fire on his victim with the two machine guns and the 20mm cannon in his Bf 109's nose. They scored devastatingly on the P-38's left Allison engine and the inboard wing area containing one of its fuel tanks. The hits immediately resulted in an explosion, flames, and a huge trail of white smoke. The Lightning made a quick turn to the right and then its pilot (Lt. Walker) bailed out at about 700 feet. Faludi circled the parachute, saw the enemy pilot land, and also spotted a military vehicle speeding toward him. He then returned to Veszprém.

Meanwhile, one of Faludi's squadron mates, 2nd Lt. Lajos Tóth, skirmished with some other P-38s near Tét. As he targeted — and hit — one of them (probably Lt. Henry's), Tóth was attacked from above by more Lightnings. His engine was struck and burst into flame, whereupon he pulled the 109 up into a stall and then bailed out of it. His parachute opened at only 100 feet. Coincidentally, Corp. Faludi's victim, Lt. Walker, had landed nearby and they were picked up together and taken to the airfield at Pápa, a few

Second Lieutenant Lajos Tóth (on the right) enters the cockpit of his Bf 109 with the assistance of a ground crewman. Tóth claimed — erroneously as it turned out — to have shot down (and was officially credited with shooting down) Charles Walker, whose P-38 was the 13th of his 26 official air victories.

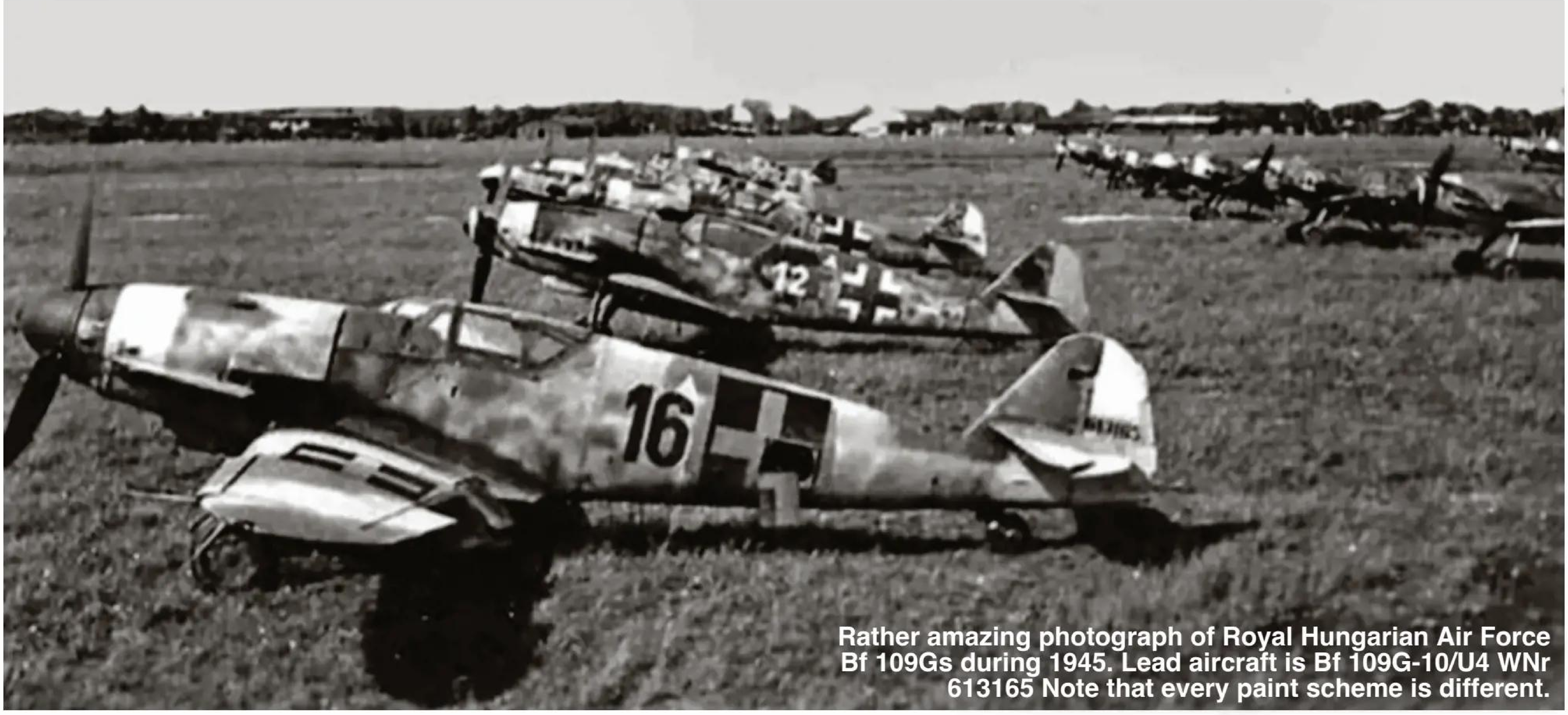
miles to the southeast. Tóth assumed the other man was the pilot of the P-38 he had hit and subsequently claimed it (erroneously) as destroyed (the 13th of his eventual 24 victories), so both he *and* Faludi were credited with shooting down Walker's plane. Before Lt. Walker was taken away the two pilots chatted, shook hands, and had their photo taken together.

Although the Puma pilots were credited with shooting down three P-38s, only one (Walker's) was actually lost. Not only were both Lt. Tóth and Corp. Faludi credited with it, but due to some other confusion, Faludi was actually credited with destroying two Lightnings, including the first one that he had only damaged. Other Puma pilots claimed to have shot down seven bombers, including a B-24 by Col. Heppes — his eighth and final victory (over four Soviet and four American planes).

None of his fellow P-38 pilots actually saw what happened to Charles Walker after he became separated from his flight. Lieutenant Belton, his squadron and group leader, reported that he "heard Lt. Walker call and say he was on single engine and needed help badly. We could not locate him and he was not heard again."

Second Lieutenant Gerard F. Cavanaugh, the element leader in Lt. Harman's flight, reported that "The flight had gone down to chase an Me 109 and the enemy airplane led us straight across an airdrome near Gyor, Hungary. Accurate light and heavy *flak* was thrown up at us from this A/D [airdrome], which we crossed

Second Lieutenant Gerard Cavanaugh, the element leader in Roy Harman's flight on 7 July, last saw Harman's wingman, Charles Walker, with a smoking engine.



Rather amazing photograph of Royal Hungarian Air Force Bf 109Gs during 1945. Lead aircraft is Bf 109G-10/U4 WNr 613165 Note that every paint scheme is different.

A formal portrait of Senior Corporal Faludi, in his dress uniform that displays his medals.

Snapshot for the folks back home. American GIs pose with a captured RHAF Bf 109G-10/U4. The Hungarian pilots that managed to make it to the west were the lucky ones — the aviators captured by the Russians were tortured, often executed, and made prisoner for years at hard labor.

at about 400 ft. altitude. I saw smoke come from Lt. Walker's left engine, but lost him momentarily while looking around for other enemy planes. When I looked ahead again, I was flying on the flight leader's wing and Lt. Walker was nowhere in sight." Roy Harman later recalled that "Cavanaugh, his wingman and I would have been shot down if Joe Belton hadn't come down to help. There were just too many for the three of us." Although Walker's plane *may* have been hit by the airdrome's anti-aircraft fire, it was erroneously assumed (as stated in the Group's official mission report) that that was what brought it down.

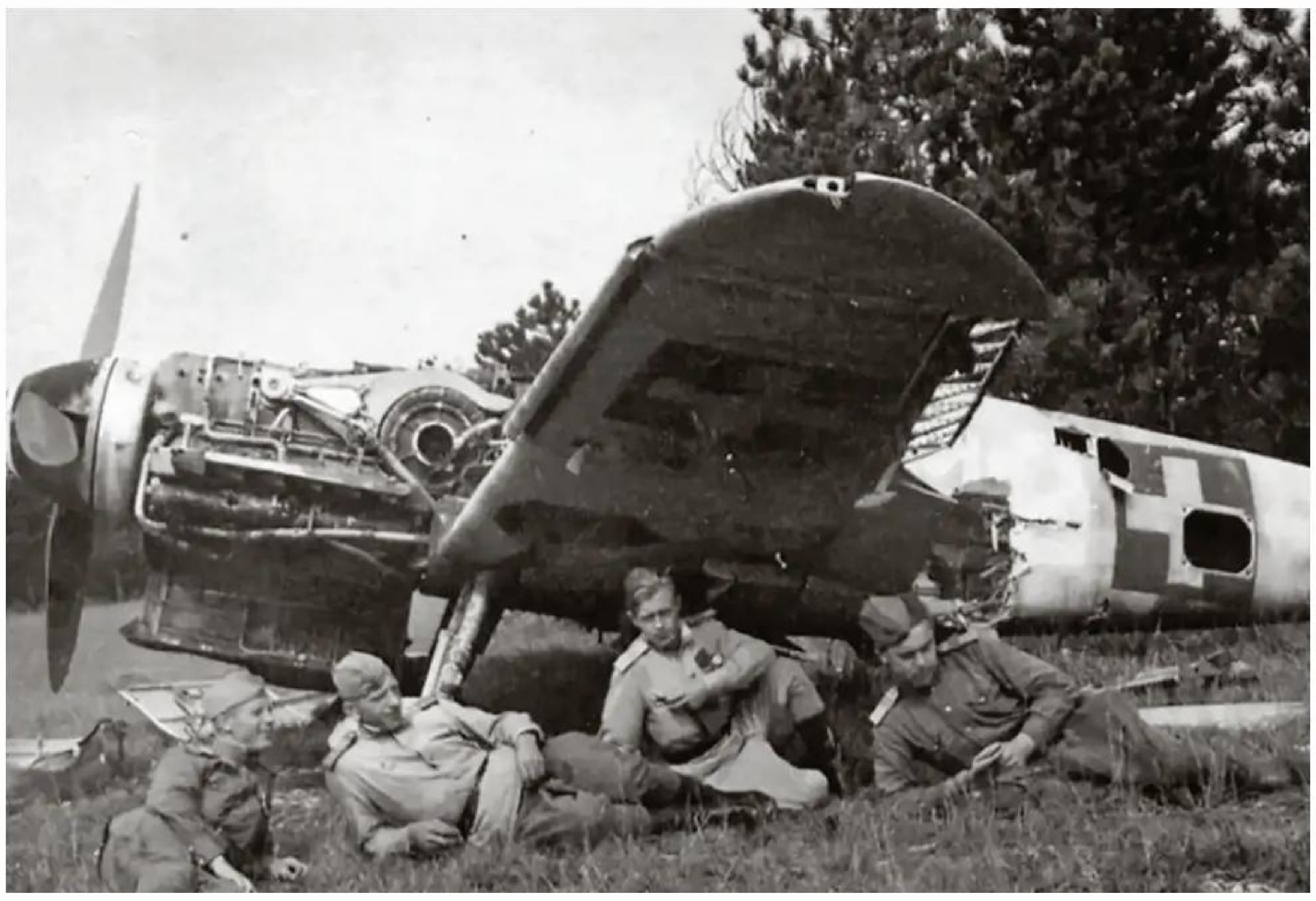
Months later, Corp. Faludi met the Hungarian army captain who had captured Lt. Walker. The captain told him that all he remembered about the enemy pilot was his name. Faludi was surprised to learn that they had the same Christian name — Károly being the Hungarian version of Charles. It would be nearly 40 years before he found out that the P-38 that shot him down and the one *he* shot down both belonged to the 95th FS, and that on 7 July 1944 he had unknowingly exacted his revenge.

In November 1944, the Pumas' focus switched from the USAAF's raids on Hungary back to the Soviets, but this time they would be fighting the Russians over their own country during its invasion by them. The Hungarians continued to fight bravely against their invaders, and the Puma pilots shot down many more enemy planes in their ultimately lost cause.

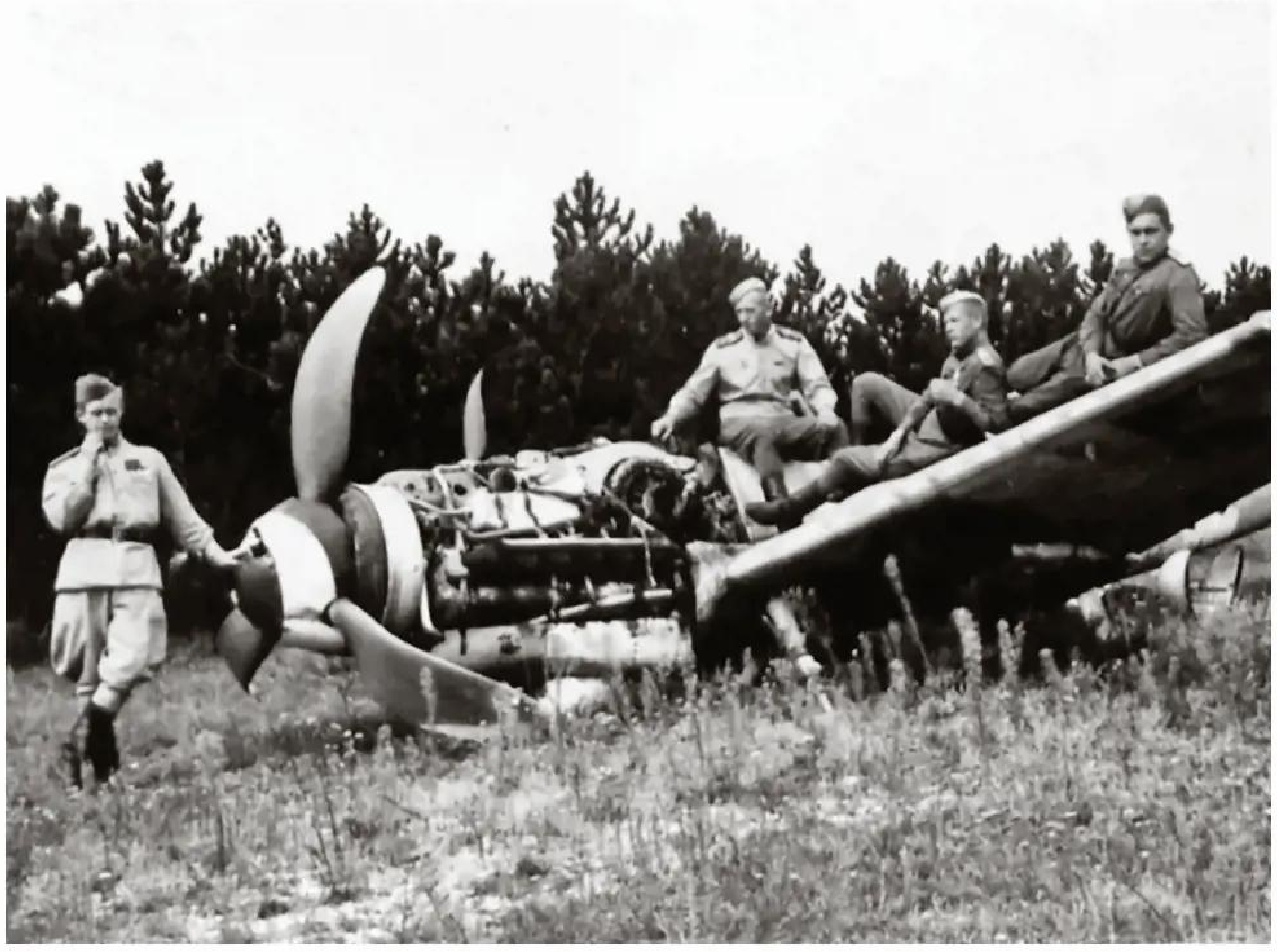
As to Károly Faludi, following the 7 July mission he was assigned to ferrying

Puma Messerschmitts prepare to scramble to intercept incoming 15th AF heavy bombers.

22 August 1944: Col. Heppes (on the right) congratulates some of his Puma pilots for the victories they claimed that day, one of which was the Group's 100th.



Russian troops relax around an abandoned RHAF Bf 109G. The Russians would perform numerous war crimes and atrocities upon Hungarian citizens.

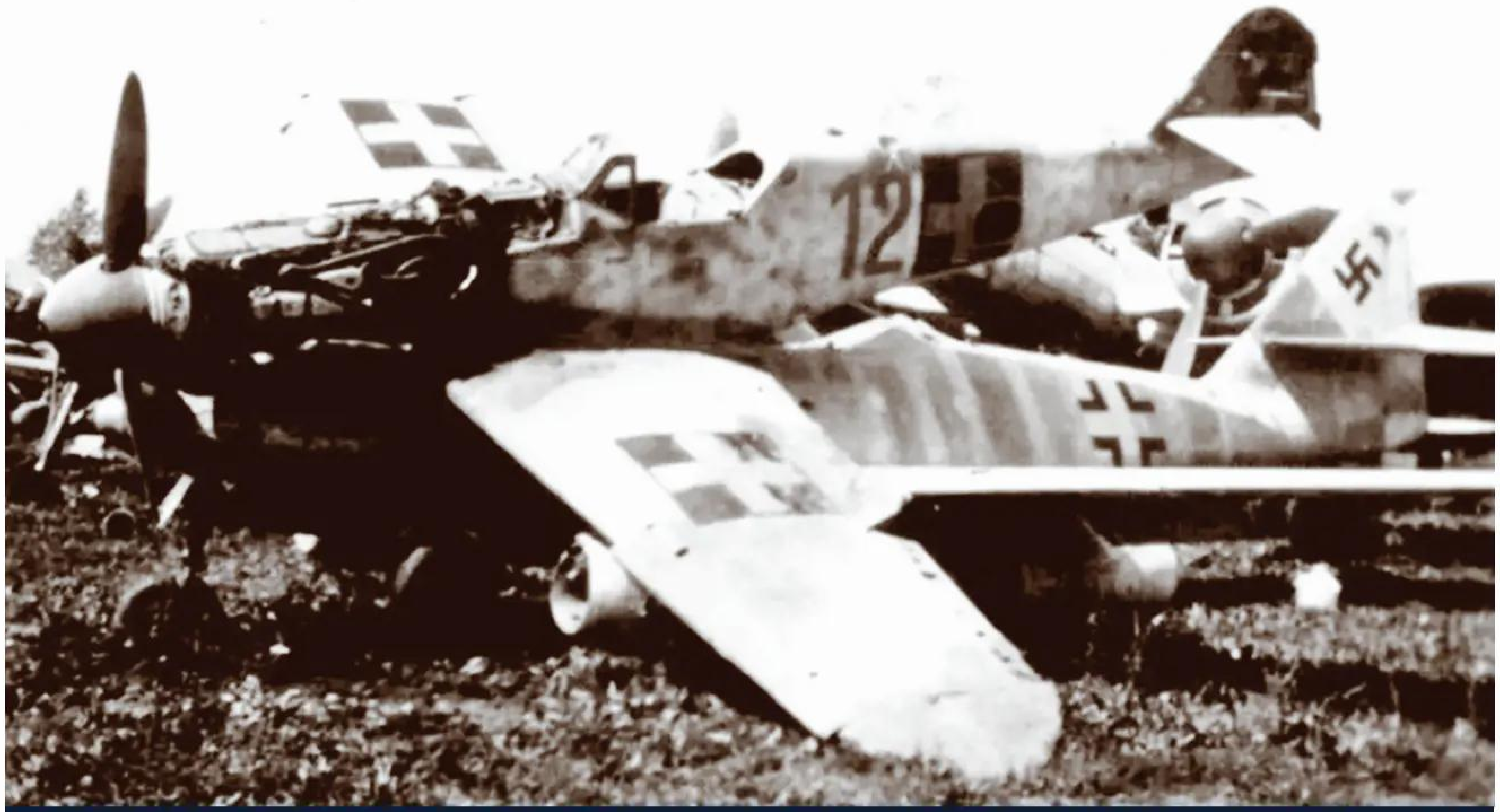


Victorious Russians with a downed RHAF Bf 109G-10.

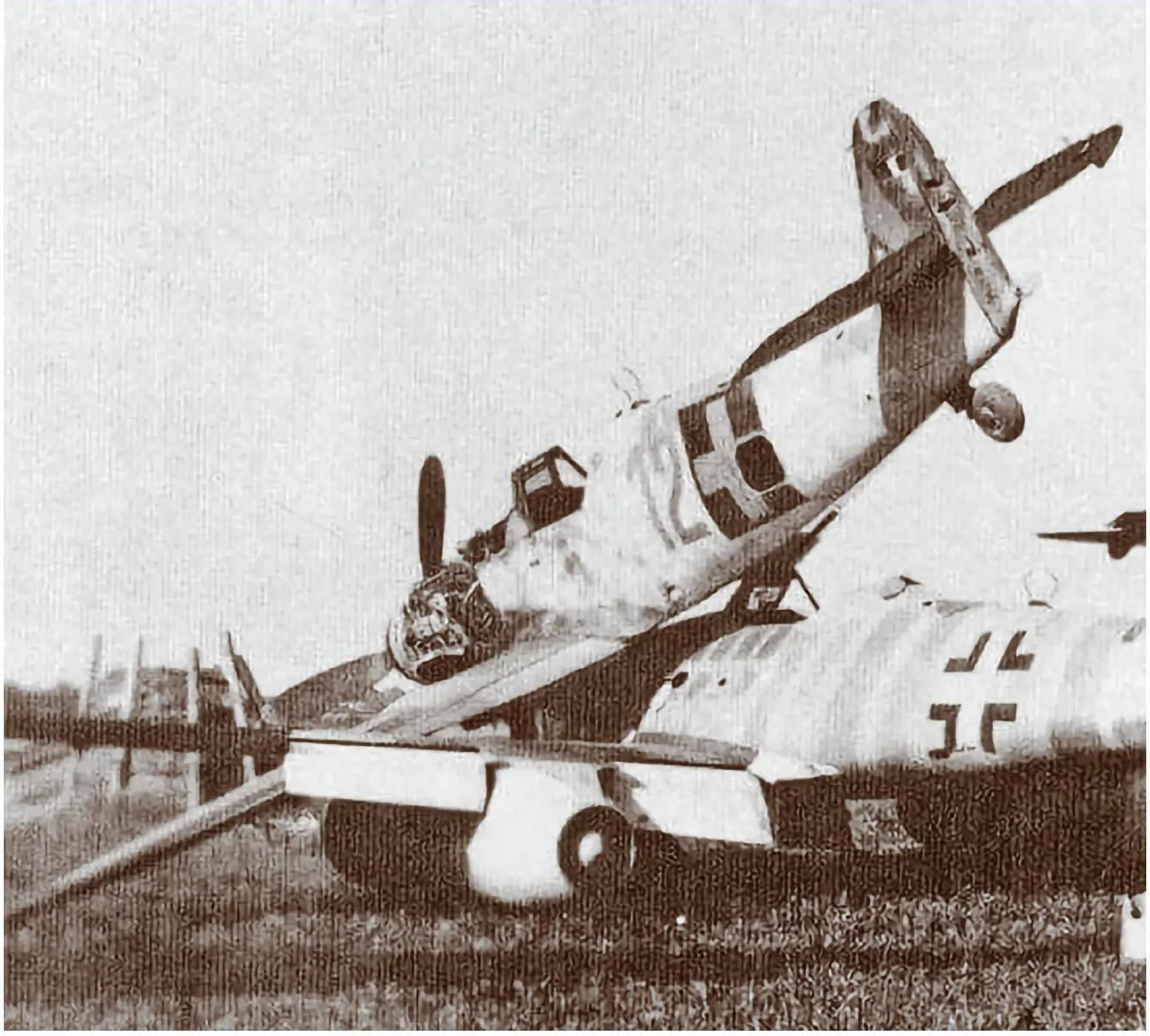
and test pilot duties. This was because of his wound that had never had a chance to fully heal; he was still barely able to walk and was supposed to have been hospitalized for a full year.

Fortunately, at the end of the war Faludi was able to arrange to be captured by the Western Allies rather than by the brutal and vindictive Russians. (Some of the captured Hungarian pilots were actually executed by the Soviets.) Postwar he married the sister of his best friend, a fellow Puma pilot, and they eventually emigrated to the United States and became American citizens. Károly also became Charles K. "Charlie" Faludi, and settled in the Los Angeles area, where he worked as an electrical engineer for Northrop Aviation.

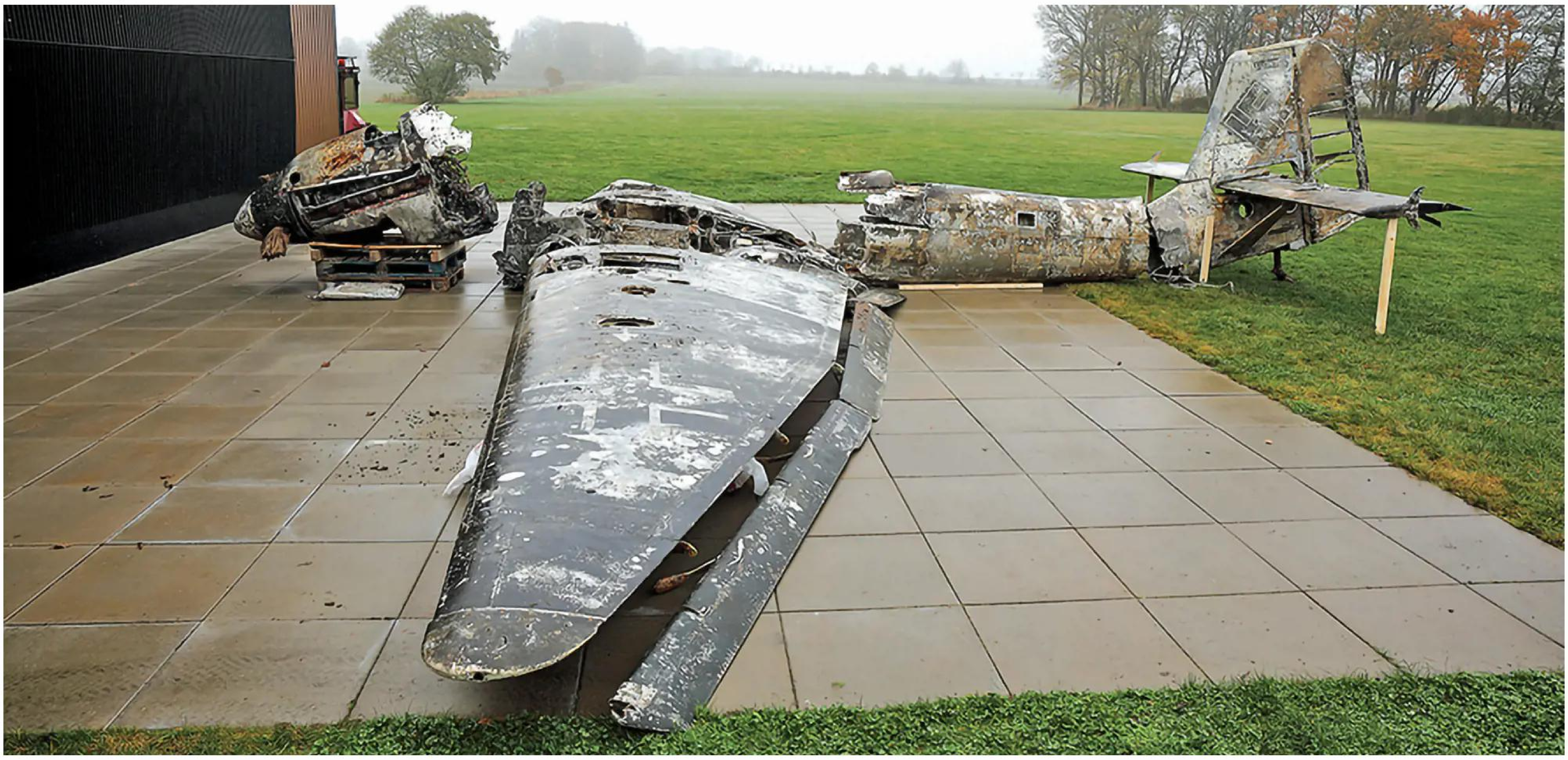
Years later, Charlie learned that a fellow Northrop employee, Leon Scrydloff, had been a P-38 pilot in Italy. Further discussion with him revealed that Scrydloff was one of the top-cover 97th FS pilots on the 7 July 1944 mission! Unfortunately, Charlie, who passed away in 1993, was never able to "reunite" with Charles Walker and return to him his flight helmet, which then-Corp. Faludi had obtained in 1945. He had located Mr. Walker in northern California, but due to his lingering trauma from being shot down on one of his first combat missions and his poor treatment in a German prisoner of war camp, the other Charles declined an invitation to meet and chat with his old enemy. Faludi *did*, however, become acquainted with Orson Osborne, the P-38 pilot who had shot *him* down on 13 April 1944. **AC**



Interesting shots of a Hungarian Bf 109G dumped atop a Messerschmitt Me 262 with a Ju 88 in the background. The aircraft were being gathered for a mass scrapping.



(continued from page 23)

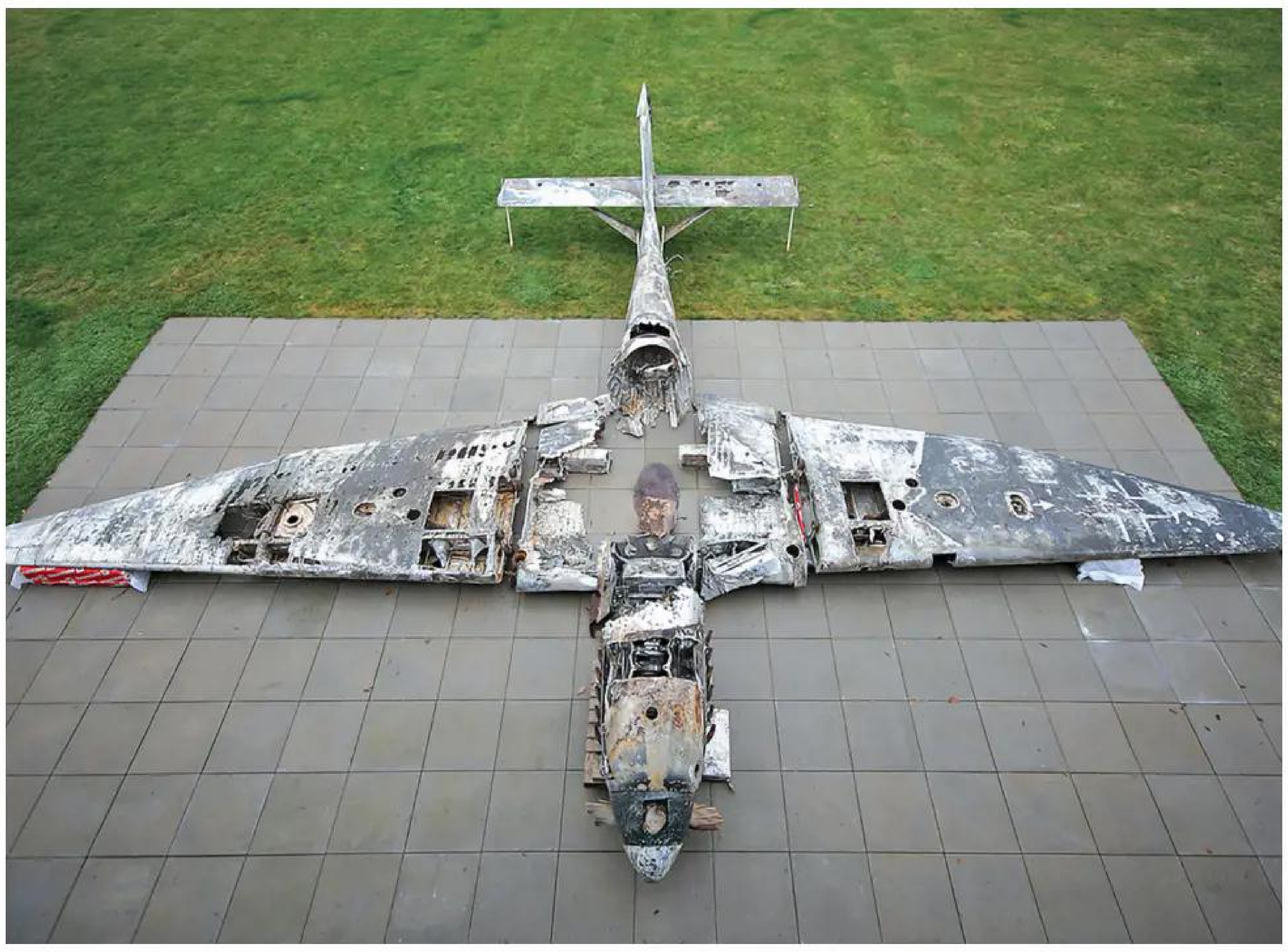


The Stuka neatly laid out following its recovery. (AHM)

STUKA UPDATE

Among the many significant projects at the American Heritage Museum, the restoration of Junkers Ju 87D-5 WNr 131587 is perhaps the most highly anticipated. There has not been a flying Ju 87 since the end of WWII and only two original examples are known to exist (Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, RAF Museum). Obviously, this is a costly and long-term project but work is well underway on this important *Luftwaffe* warplane.

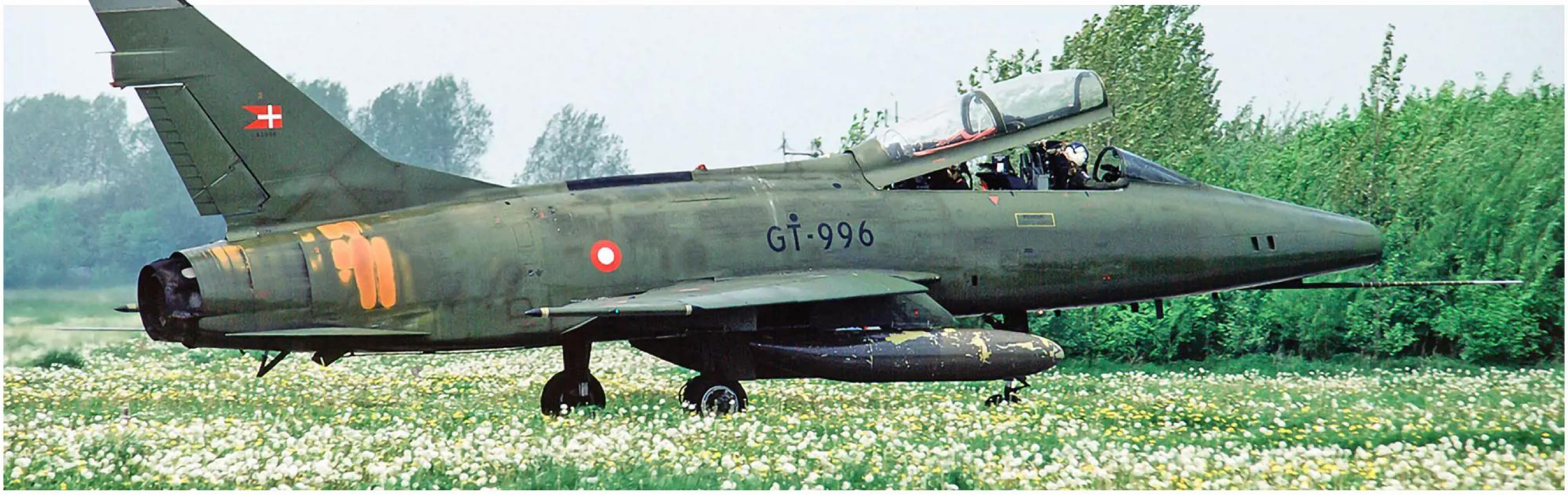
This particular plane was last operated by *1/SG.5* in Finland where it was fighting Soviet forces. With the code Q9+CH, the Stuka was being flown on 4 April 1944 by *Uffz.* Walter Ernest with *Uffz.* Ernest Zenkier as gunner. Running low on fuel and probably lost over the vast uncharted territory, they decided to land on a frozen lake. Jettisoning the landing gear, the Stuka came in for a perfect belly landing. After getting out of the cockpit and gathering their emergency supplies, they detonated a grenade in the cockpit so that the Russians could not make use of the plane. As the ice melted, the Stuka disappeared beneath the surface where it would remain until being raised from the lake bed some 77 years later. Hunting for downed warplanes has become a growth industry in this part of the world and the discovery of the Stuka was of major import. The plane was carefully raised and the very cold temperatures had kept everything amazingly intact, including the temporary winter camouflage that was slathered on the aircraft to make it less visible from above. The museum has been gathering Stuka components (which, as one can imagine, are extremely rare) and in April at a German aviation swap meet, they discovered and purchased a Ju 87D landing gear leg. The plane has been moved to a European restoration facility and we will be featuring regular updates on the aircraft.



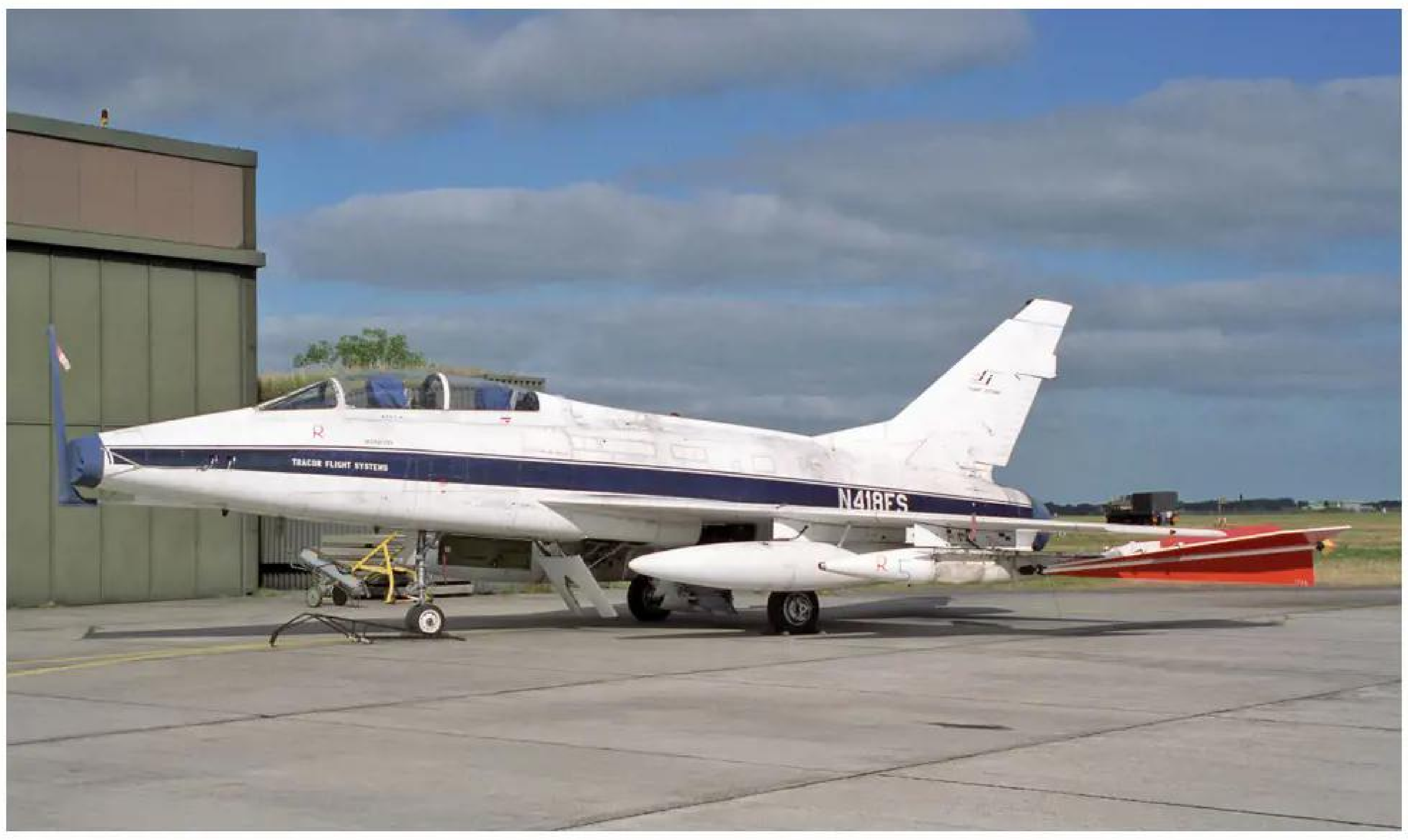
As can be seen, the cockpit area was gutted with the crew set off a grenade so that Soviet forces would not be able to utilize the aircraft.

Warehouse Find!
R-1820-97-99 Cylinders
We just found 200 new R-1820-97 and -99 cylinders in our warehouse!
Enough to build 10 new engines for
B-17s • FM-2 Wildcats • Lodestars

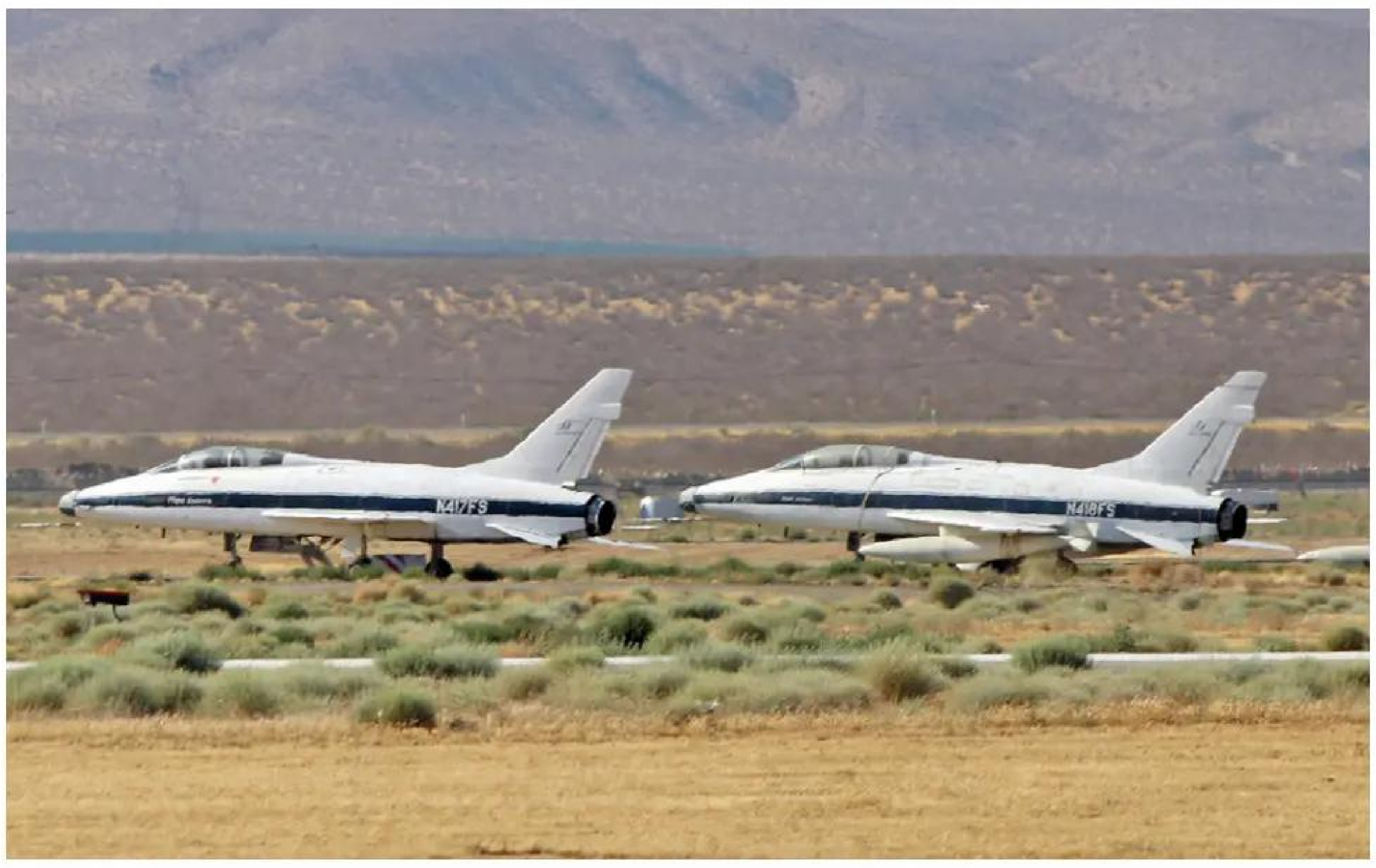
Chester Roberts Supply Company
Overhauled Radial Aircraft Engines & Propellers
R-985 R-1340 R-1820 R-1830 R-2600 R-2800
2B20 2D30 12D40 22D30 22D40 33D50 23E50
Tel: 903-429-6805 • Fax: 903-429-6047
Crs5r@crsaviation.com
661 Pearce St. Collinsville, TX 76233
Buying engines/parts • propellers/parts
Top Prices Paid, Send List or Call



The Super Sabre when serving with the Royal Danish Air Force as GT-996.



With tow gear and a target attached, N418FS was photographed while operating in West Germany.



N418FS and N419FS in storage at Mojave, California.

MUSEUM ACQUIRES F-100

For years, the skies above Mojave, California, resounded to the booming afterburners of North American F-100 Super Sabres operated by Flight Systems Inc. Sadly, those halcyon days are long gone but two semi-derelict Super Sabres have been parked at Mojave's famous "boneyard" for a considerable period of time. These two aircraft, registered N418FS and N419FS, have become familiar sights to those that go on the tours through the area. Both planes were purchased by a Canadian outfit called Airworks during 2020. The company builds high-end compressor equipment. Why the Super Sabres were purchased is unclear but they were parked in the boneyard and were never worked upon but at least they were safe from the threat of extinction. During April, one of the aircraft, N418FS, was disassembled in preparation for the move to its new home at the Fort Worth Aviation Museum (FWAM). As an aside, this museum is comprised of a collection of very sad looking aircraft all parked in the open on grass and dirt. The planes are poorly painted in a variety of inaccurate military schemes and we have to ask ourselves to what end are these aircraft displayed in what appears to be an open lot? Today, there are a number of such aviation museums where the aircraft collection comes from airframes probably loaned by the military and, in the opinion of *Air Classics*, these types of displays do no good for promoting historic aviation. Such museums do not have the storage/display capability nor funding to present these aircraft as valued historic artifacts but they probably have some dedicated volunteers. What were once beautiful, highly-maintained warplanes are now faded and semi-abandoned in appearance. At least with the F-100 parked at Mojave, its condition was relatively stabilized. Fort Worth has poor weather and high humidity — all negative factors when it comes to aircraft preservation. Combined with that, the planes are parked in the open on dirt and grass and this is a no-no in a high humidity climate since it allows condensation, and corrosion, on an aircraft's lower extremities. It does not appear this museum has any form of indoor facility. Surely this rare Super Sabres could have found a better home. The aircraft acquired by FWAM was built for the USAF as 56-3996 in 1958 and, after USAF use, it was transferred to the Royal Danish Air Force in 1974 and carried the coding GT-996. When retired, the Super Sabre was purchased by Flight Systems in 1982, initially with the civil registration N3251S before becoming N418FS the next year. The plane was operated on a variety of military contracts including target towing in Europe before heading to Mojave. At the field, the now-rare two-seat Super Sabre was used for testing equipment and other tasks until being retired. Around 2002, they were purchased by Big Sky Warbirds of Belgrade, Montana, and parked. Airworks acquired the Super Sabres during a 2020 online auction.

CURTISS-WRIGHT ENGINE PARTS
Curtiss Wright
R-1820 • R-2600 • R-3350
PARTS • TOOLS • ACCESSORIES
CARL SKINNER Co.
Ph: 805-654-1162 • www.carlskinnerco.com
456
E
NAVY
VT-5
USS LEXINGTON

The iconic de Havilland Comet 4 being moved to outside display where its condition will undoubtedly slide downhill.

Interior of the AirSpace building before "repurposing." The Avro York, foreground, is now outside along with the Comet and the de Havilland Dove (barely visible behind the Whirlwind helicopter). All hanging aircraft will be lowered and the Sunderland flying boat will be put outside. The interior of the hangar will now display Cold War and more modern aviation achievements.

WHAT IS HAPPENING AT DUXFORD?

Virtually all readers of *Air Classics* know of the Imperial War Museum facility at historic Duxford Airfield in England. As we have noted, many museums are now run by bureaucrats that have little to no knowledge of what their respective museums actually exhibit. They do know when they will retire and how much pension they will get and that is about it. We have been watching a distressing turn of events at Duxford. The field, after military use, was initially established by those that loved aviation — both flying and preserving it. More recent years have seen the demise of the fabulous Flying Legends airshow along with a restriction in private activity at the Battle of Britain field. The IWM owns the airfield and it is undertaking a major project to "modernize and enhance" its exhibits and facilities. This includes making the displays "more relevant." Part of this has included the closure of the extremely popular Land Warfare Hall that permanently closes on 1 June 2025 because "it no longer meets the environmental conditions required to keep the IWM's collections safe." In the UK, the bureaucrats have come up with a nasty little fiefdom called "health and safety" that attempts to infiltrate every aspect of British society with rules and regulations — such as the idiotic wearing of brightly-colored vests when walking on rural flightlines. The fact that the Land Warfare Hall is "unsafe" rather boggles the mind. Rather, the concept does not fit into the bureaucratic mind-set of how the airfield should be presented to potential visitors. Many of the vehicles in the Land Warfare Hall were privately owned and they have now been removed, thus disallowing the public the experience of seeing some pretty interesting equipment. At the main IWM building in Lambeth, the decision has been made to apparently discontinue the gallery honoring holders of the Victoria Cross and George Cross. Once again, it appears that the powers to be view these medals as "potentially upsetting" to "New Britons" — the large minority population that now makes its home in the UK.

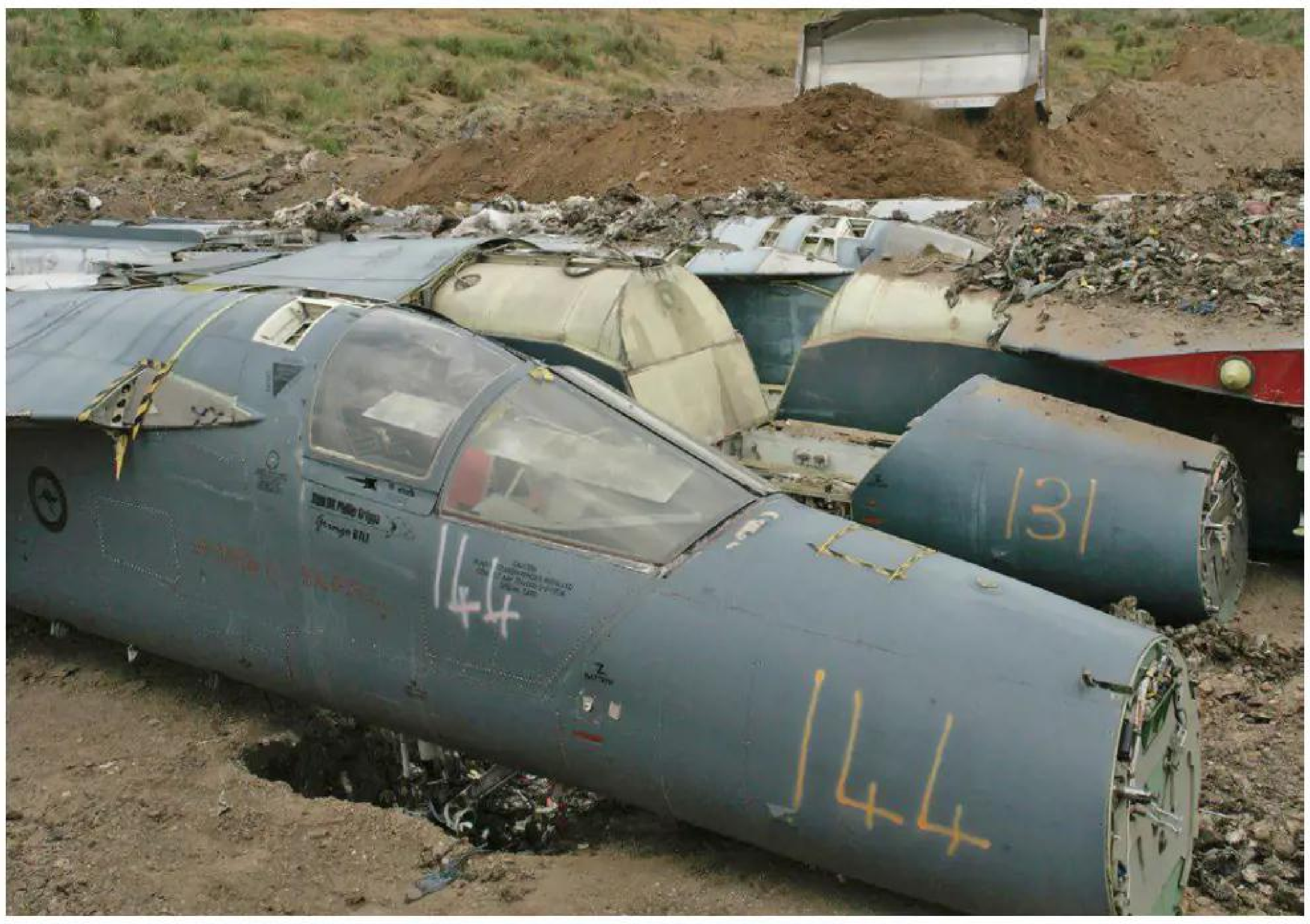
The Avro York being removed from the safety of indoor display to its new outside parking spot.

Volunteers spent tens of thousands of hours restoring the Sunderland Mk. V and it will now be placed on outside display.

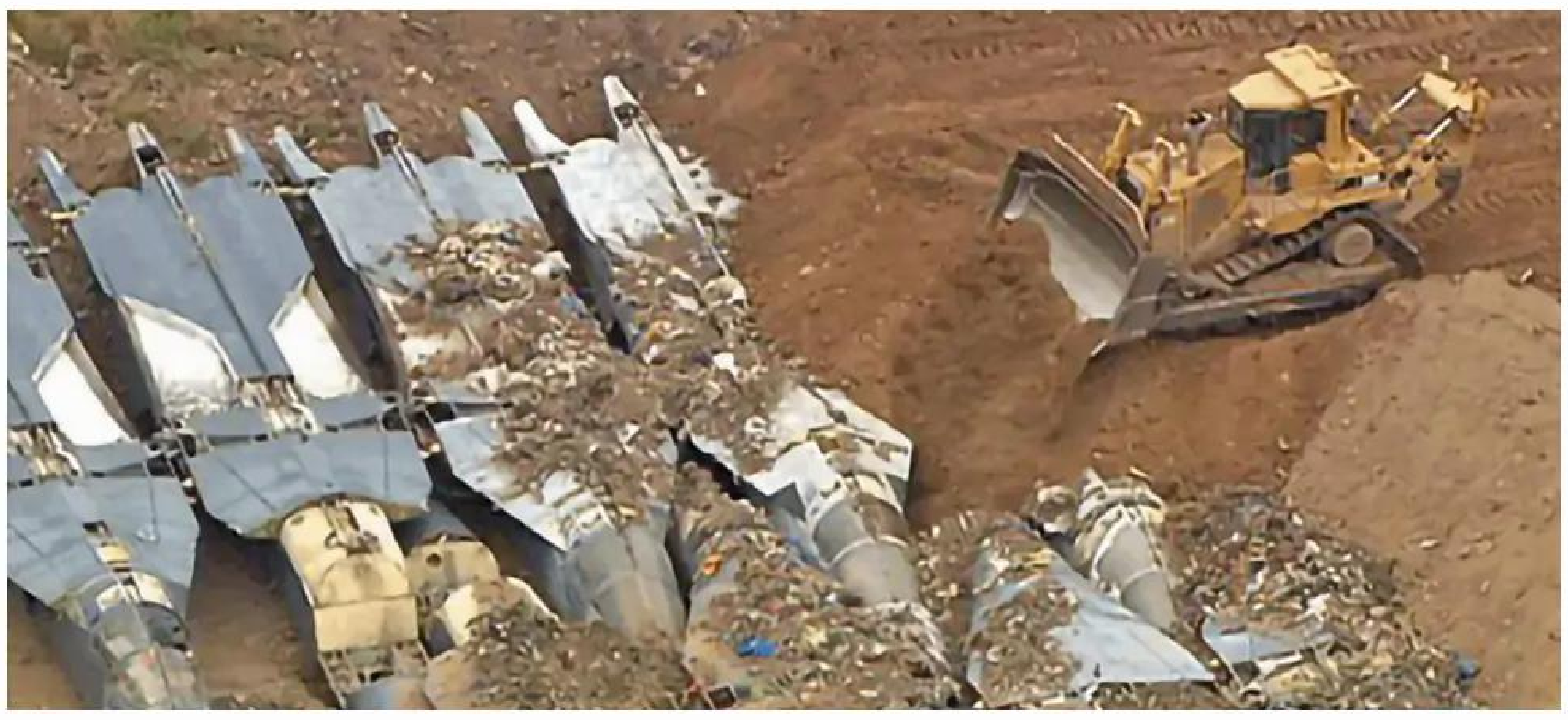
But, getting back to aviation at Duxford we must take note of a truly stupid decision. Years ago, the massive AirSpace building was constructed at the field and thus took away from the historic charm of Duxford. In a complete revision of concept, it now appears that the AirSpace building will be devoted to the Cold War (our emails to the IWM have gone unanswered). Duxford did play a part in that pivotal period of history, but it was a rather minor role. What is happening is that the aircraft belonging to a rather wonderful organization called the Duxford Aviation Society (DAS) are being thrust out into the harsh British elements where they shall surely suffer. DAS has assembled and cared for an outstanding collection of British airliners. Now that British aviation manufacturing is a thing of the past, the IWM wants these rare icons consigned from indoor protection and tossed into the corrosion-prone exterior exhibition space. Several very important aircraft have now been moved and one is de Havilland DH.106 Comet 4 G-APDB. This aircraft made its final flight on 12 February 1974 after having flown 36,269 hours with 15,733 landings. This particular aircraft, besides being a pioneering jet and a lovely machine, made history on 4 October 1958. On that date, the first regularly scheduled transatlantic passenger service with jet aircraft began when two British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) Comet 4s (G-APDB and G-APDC) left nearly simultaneously from London Heathrow Airport to Idlewild Airport in New York and from New York to London. Since arriving at Duxford, this now very rare survivor has been cared for by DAS volunteers and constantly improved upon.

Another DAS aircraft tossed outside is the Avro York, one of only two surviving examples from a production run of 257 aircraft. The transport was derived from the Lancaster bomber. The DAS York carries the registration G-ANTK (ex-RAF MW232) and is a veteran of the Berlin Airlift. The survival of this York was a close thing and it is only because of DAS that the aircraft continues to educate on a very important period of WWII and the Cold War. The IWM has also stated that the "hanging" aircraft in AirSpace are going to be removed as the area is repurposed. Another alarming note is that the very rare Short Sunderland Mk. V flying boat will also be staked out in the open. The IWM is also disposing of aircraft — offering de Havilland Tiger Moth N6635 for sale (what British aircraft is more iconic than the Tiger Moth?) that had been hung from the AirSpace ceiling. A DAS spokesperson states, "We at the DAS British Airline Collection are now investigating every possible way of protecting this important aircraft [referring specifically to the York] for the future. Outside preservation of airframes is a challenge and will be expensive but we are determined to succeed. With three additional aircraft now outside [besides the Comet and the York, the de Havilland Dove has been removed from its hanging position and put outside. It should be noted that the Dove was one of the very few successful British post-war commercial aircraft] our care and preservation costs will rise by around 30%. Visitors [135,000 in 2024] have very much enjoyed the York's Cold War Berlin Airlift interpretation displays, but we shall start to look at highlighting other events in its flying career before it arrived at Duxford in 1986." It is still too early for a complete assessment of what will happen to these historic airframes but the fact they are now outside means they have started going downhill since the first day of exposure.

The F-111 was the most potent aircraft in the RAAF inventory. F-111C A8-129 was photographed performing a "dump and burn" at an airshow.



Sad end for a great aircraft. The F-111s are covered with dirt to become part of a landfill.



The F-111s in their pit prior to being covered with earth.

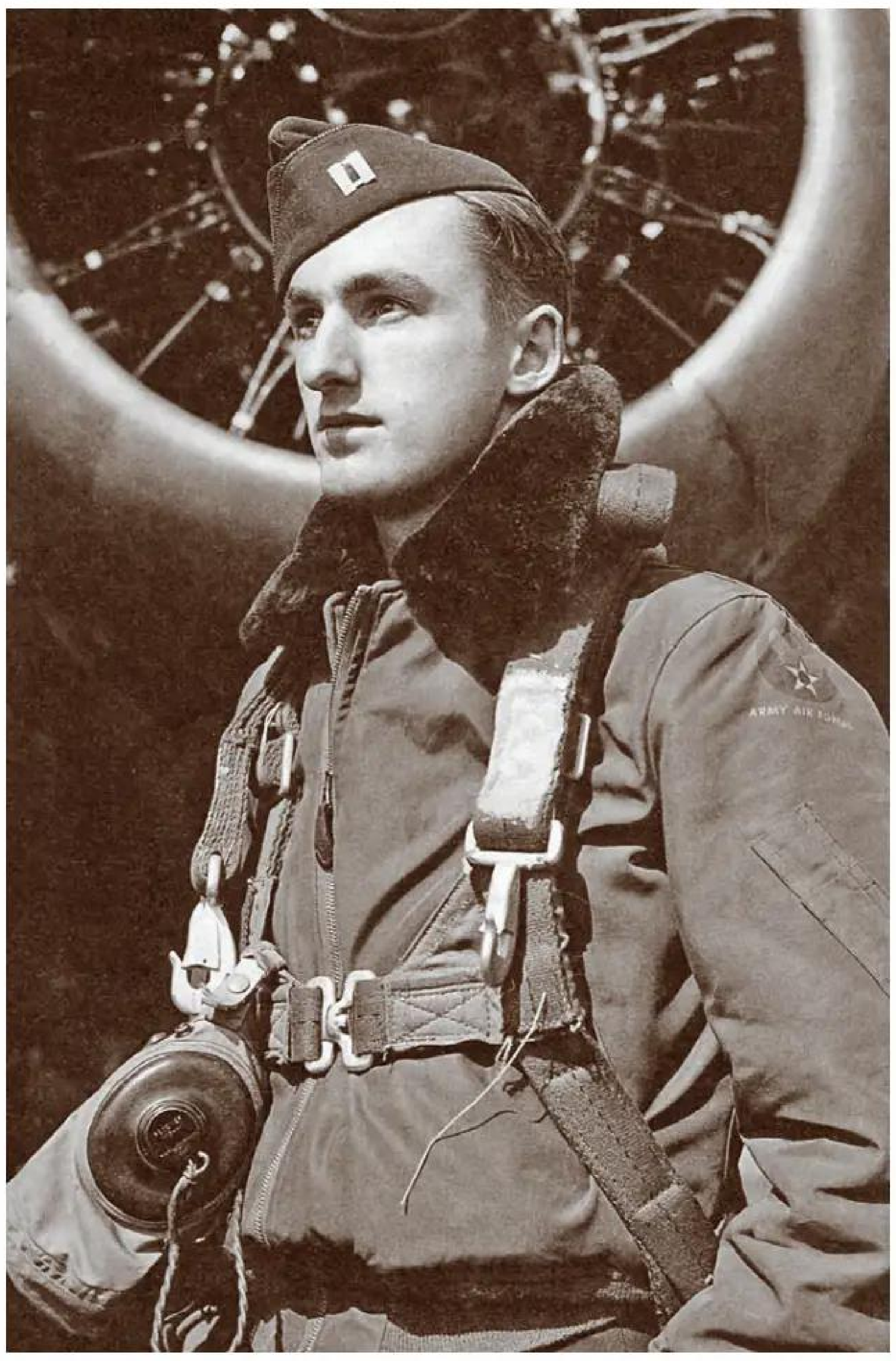
THOSE BURIED SWITCHBLADES

Recently, *Air Classics* contributors have been sharing their knowledge on military aircraft that were "buried" after their service requirements had come to an end. We have all heard stories about WWII aircraft buried in pits at the end of the war or German fighters stored in caves that were then sealed. At Clark Field in the Philippines, dozens of near-new Lockheed Lightnings were destroyed in such a manner. In fact, one southern California scam artist made a brief but lucrative living utilizing *Air Classics* photos of the Clark Field P-38s piled one atop another. He used them to convince "investors" that these aircraft were still at Clark and in good condition. He did not bother to mention that after the P-38s were stacked up, they were then subjected to explosives such as grenades and sticks of TNT to render them unusable. Prior to being bulldozed into a pit, they were set afire with napalm. So, the twin-boom fighters were far from being in "near fly-away condition." After the investors found the truth about the P-38s, a lawsuit was initiated against the scam artist but their money was long gone. We will be presenting an article on buried ex-military aircraft in an upcoming issue because some of the stories were actually true. One of our contributors brought up the fact that the Royal Australian Air Force actually did bury 23 of their General Dynamics F-111 Switchblades (or Aardvarks, depending on which name you like). The RAAF acquired the aircraft as a direct counter to what they viewed as their main enemy — Indonesia. The RAAF got their first examples in 1973 and the end came on 3 December 2010 when F-111C A8-125 touched down at RAAF Amberley. So, what to do with the planes? Thirteen were set aside for museums but the remaining 23 were buried in a landfill outside of Ipswich, Queensland, on 21/23 November 2011. This was done in a very neat manner as can be seen in the photos. This caused a great deal of upset with Australian aviation enthusiasts but the RAAF stated that this was a contract requirement with the American government. The wings and tails were removed from the aircraft and scrapped. The reason given for burying the fuselages was that they were built from bonded panels that utilized asbestos. Trying to recover the asbestos was not cost effective so the decision to dig a large pit and bury the planes was made. There was even a diagram made of the final resting spot for the aircraft, utilizing their RAAF serials. Our upcoming article will have a number of interesting details and we would not be surprised if expeditions are launched to recover the buried Warbirds.

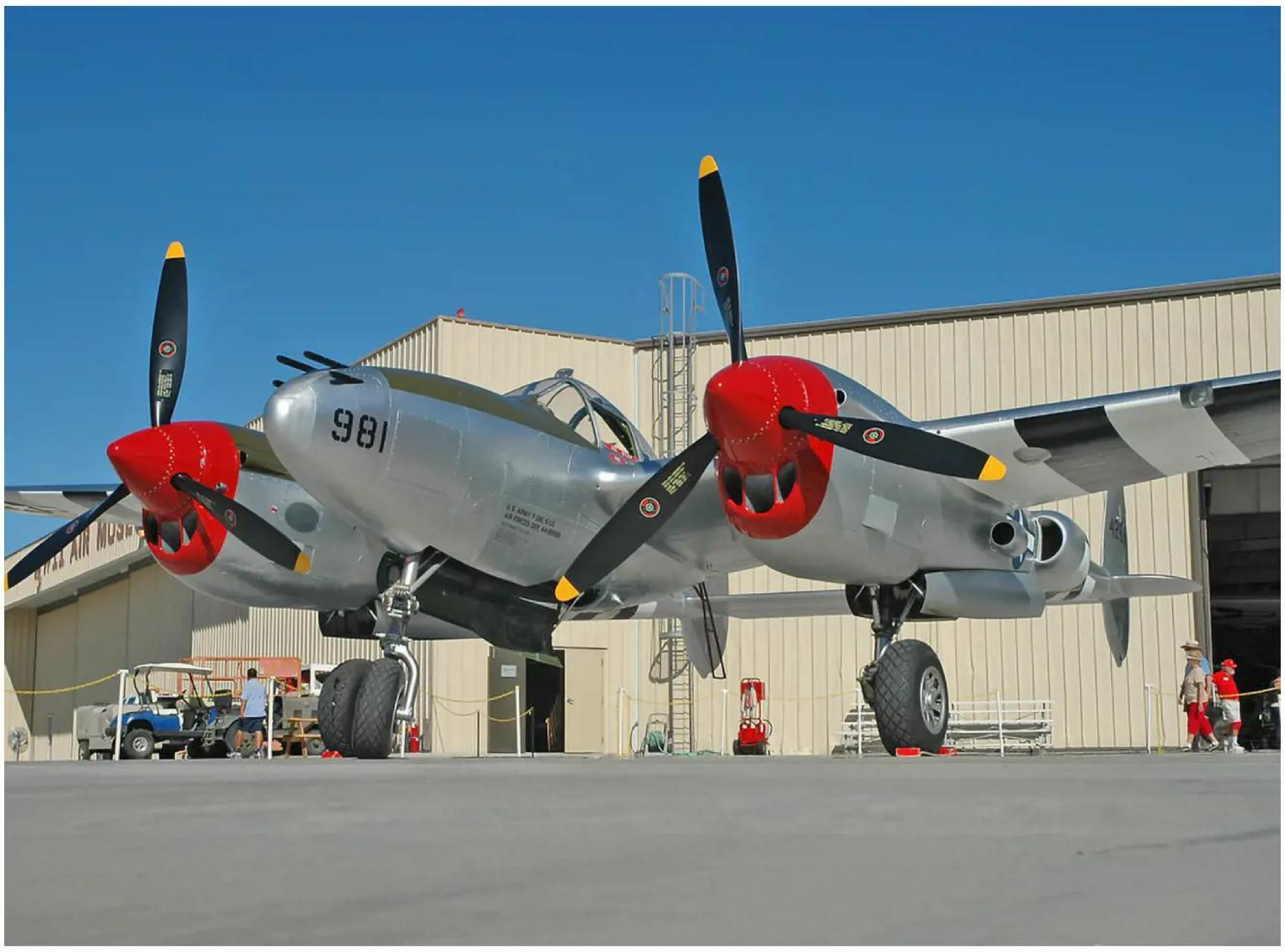
NORTHROP
P-61B
BLACK WIDOW

There are only four P-61 'Black Widow' night fighters in existence, worldwide. All but one of these survivors are on static display never to fly again. **Help us restore the fourth 'Black Widow' and get her in the air.**

Purchase the P-61 PlaneTag from our website **(www.maam.org)** or call us at **(610) 372-7333.**
Proceeds support our P-61 restoration.
MOTO ART
OWN A PIECE OF HISTORY
NORTHROP
P-61B
BLACK WIDOW
PLANETAGS
NORTHROP
P-61B
BLACK WIDOW
GENUINE SKIN
SN #: 42-39445
# 0105 OF 3,200
GENUINE SKIN LIMITED EDITION
MID-ATLANTIC AIR MUSEUM



Captain Jack Croul during his USAAF service.



Jack shared his aircraft, including his immaculate P-38, openly and often had them on display at numerous airshows.

JACK CROUL

A quiet and unassuming man, John "Jack" Vedder Croul was an outstanding member of the "Greatest Generation." Jack could often be found at his Allied Fighters hangar at Chino Airport where he would enjoy walking around the aircraft he had collected including the Lockheed Lightning, North American Mustangs, and Republic Thunderbolt. At age 18, Jack enlisted in the USAAF and by 1944 he was a lead navigator for the 338th Bomb Squadron, 96th Bomb Group. He would lead his B-17s on 33 missions, including two on D-Day. After the war, Capt. Croul set his sights on a business education and this did him well. By the time he retired, he was the Chairman of Behr Process Corporation and this allowed him to indulge in two of his passions — collecting post-war European automobiles and collecting and restoring WWII aircraft. Jack was very generous with his aircraft and allowed *Air Classics* numerous opportunities to photograph his beautifully maintained Warbirds. Jack was having a rare F6F-3 restored and the plane is now basically complete and ready to fly. Jack passed away at age 100 at his home in Newport Beach, California, on 23 February.

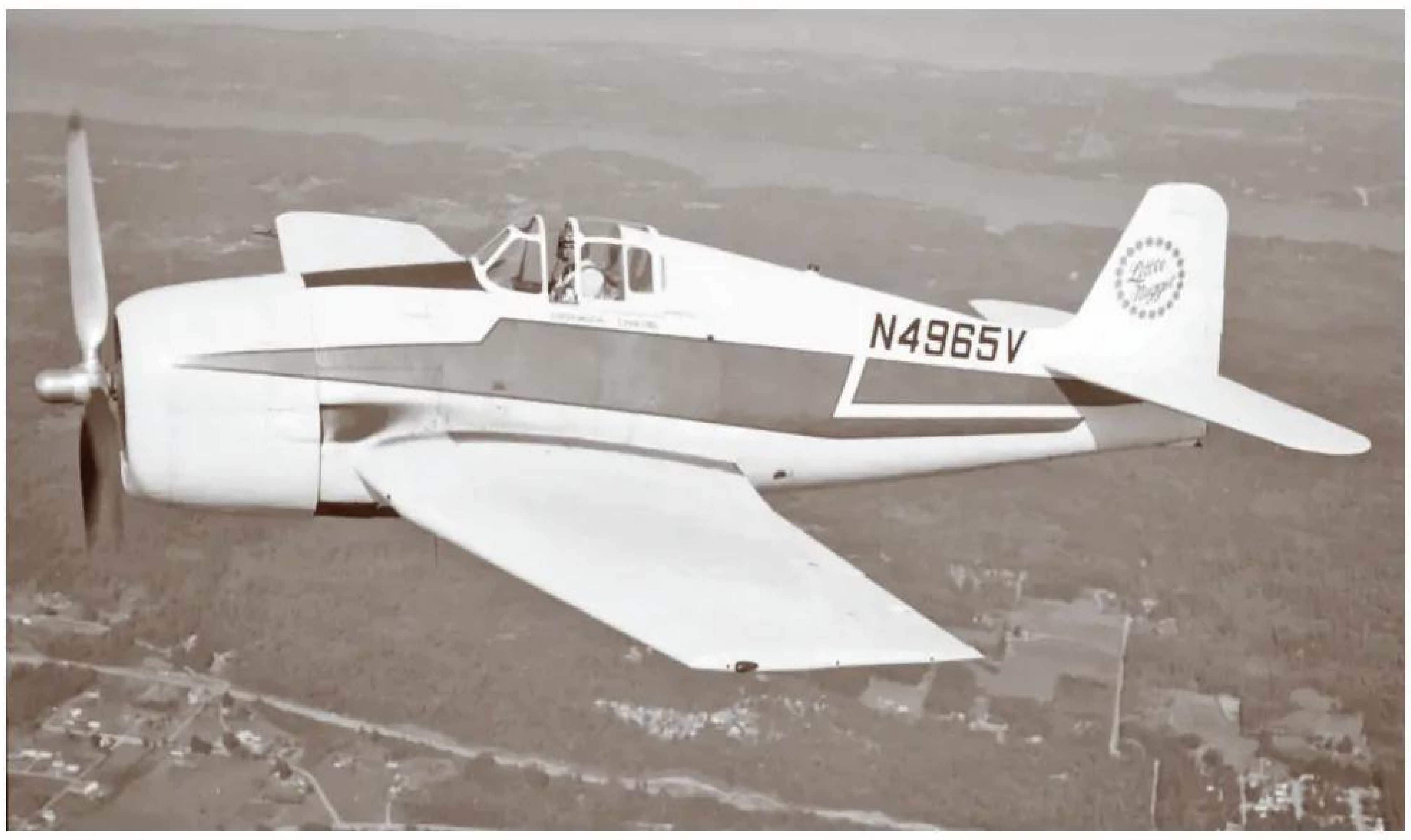
GossHawk
UNLIMITED

Vintage/Warbird Aircraft
Restoration & Maintenance
T-28, P-51, Fw 190, T-6, B-17, L-29, PB4Y-2, Me 262
Stinson V-77 and a wide variety of other aircraft

52 Years Aviation Mechanic Experience
20 Years with Champlin Fighter Museum

3184 N. Rockwell Ave.
Casa Grande, AZ 85122
(520) 423-2622

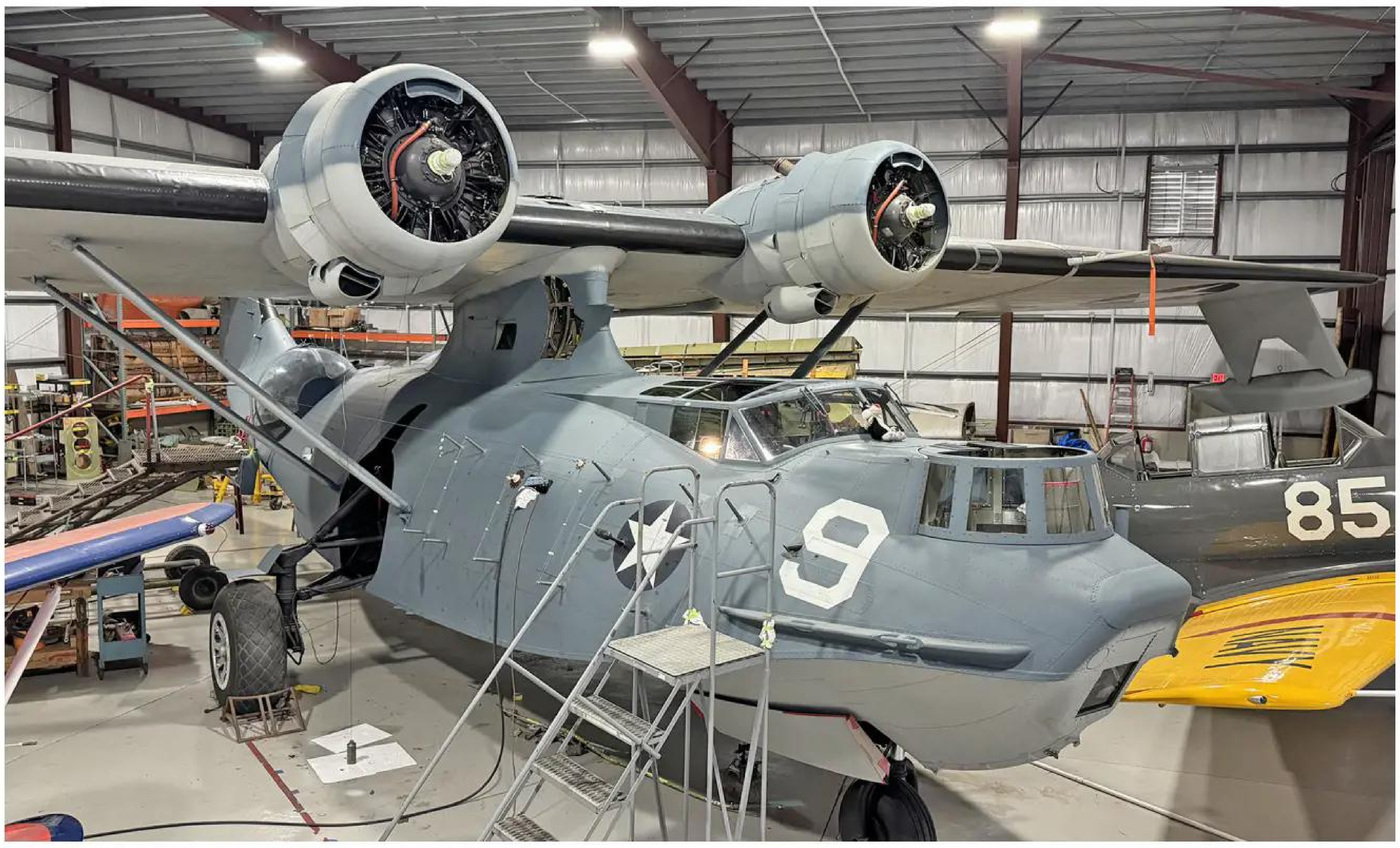
Dave Goss, President
www.gosshawkunlimited.com
Info@gosshawkunlimited.com



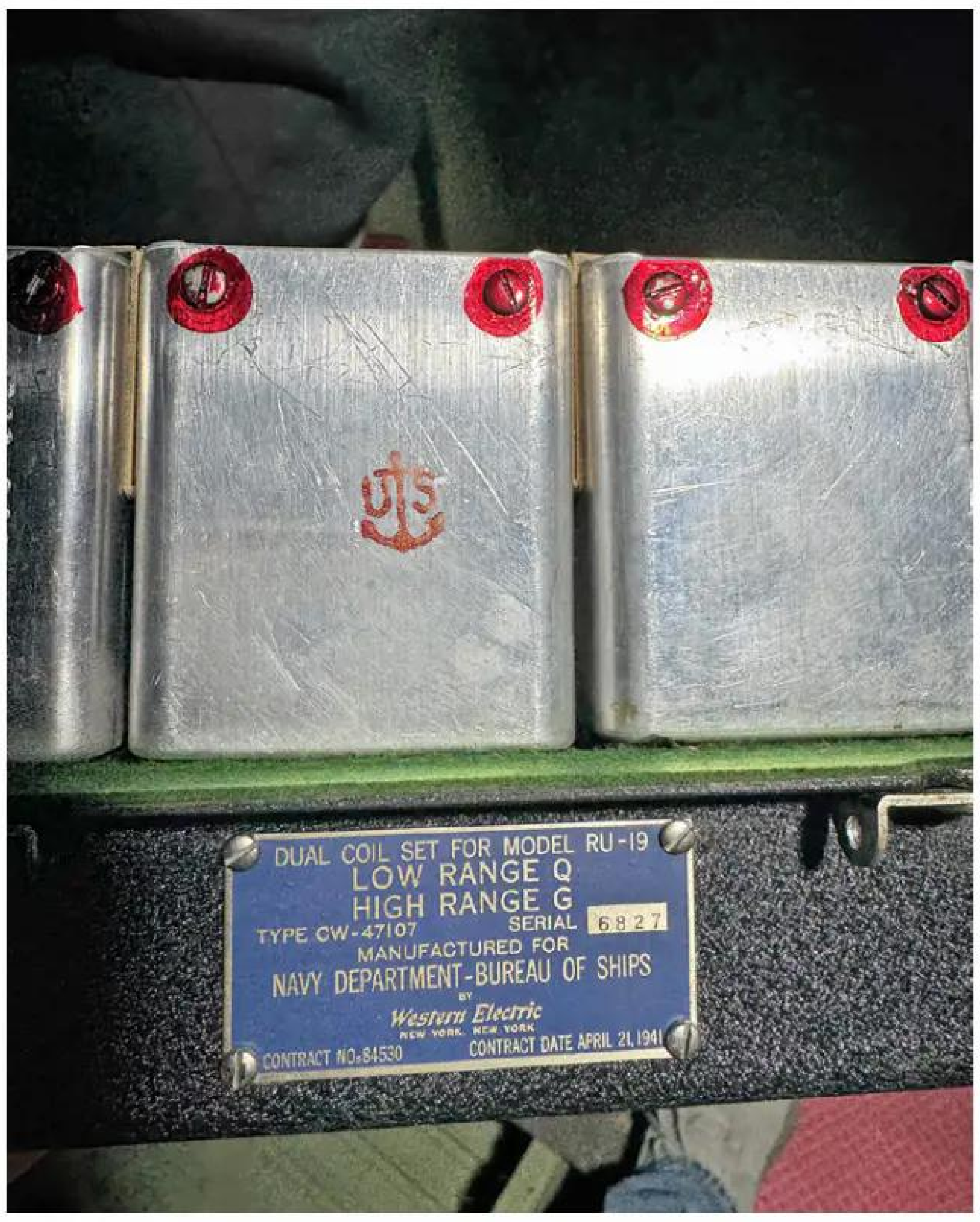
At the time of his passing, Jack's rare F6F-3 Hellcat had just completely been restored. This aircraft has a long and interesting history and was at one time owned by the president of Alaska Airlines who had the plane finished in his company's color scheme.

ALLIED FIGHTERS
CHINO, CALIFORNIA
ELEV. 650

The Allied Fighters hangar at Chino Airport.



The nose turret and bombardier's position in place on the PBY-5A.



Original radio equipment installation.

COMBAT CATALINA UPDATE

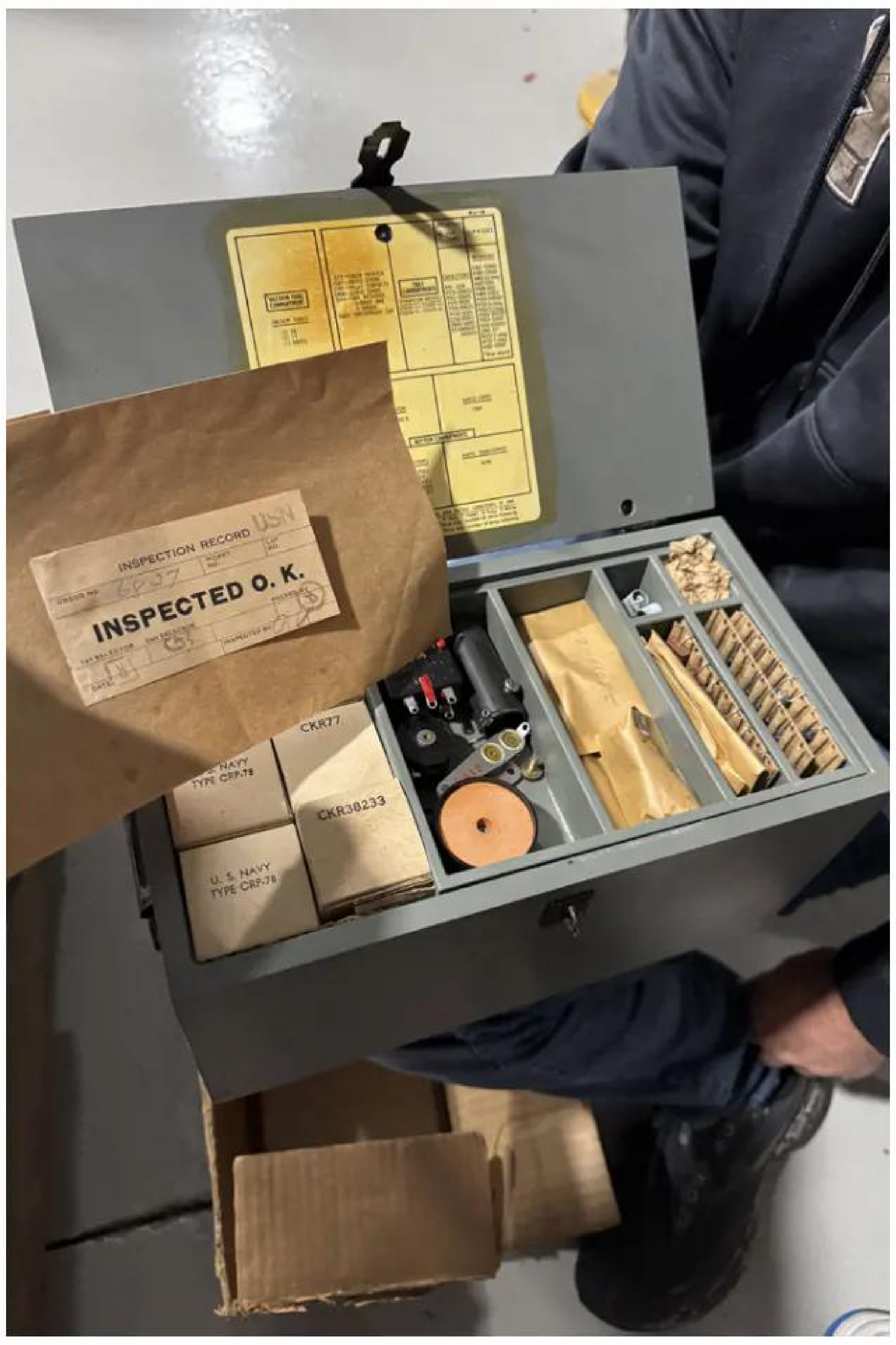
Work progresses at American Aero Services on the American Heritage Museum's Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina, **reports Joe Scheil**. The aircraft, BuNo 2459 is a survivor of the Battle of the Atlantic, where it scored victories over German U-Boats. One of the first five PBY-5As constructed, the aircraft was assigned to VP-73 in Iceland as aircraft #9. On 20 August 1942, under the command of Lt. R.B. Hopgood, the Cat engaged and sank *U-464*. On 5 October of that year, 2459 was flying VP-73's last convoy mission as the Cats protected Convoy HK-209. Under the command of Chief Aviation Pilot M. Luke, the crew caught *U-582* on the surface and sank it was the loss of all crew. At this point, VP-73 had achieved two U-Boat victories and they were both by 2459. Because of the terrible weather and bad operating conditions, only half of the squadron's Catalinas survived the first deployment.

When acquired, the aircraft was in good flying shape but AHM wanted to return the plane to its original WWII configuration and that required a tremendous amount of work. The interior restoration has been led by Casey Littrell who found that the plane had virtually nothing remaining of its original gear. Nearly all of the interior components have either had to be found or fabricated. Because the Cats flew long hours, the amphibians had a bunk area and this mid-ship arrangement has been mostly completed and is awaiting a few small details.

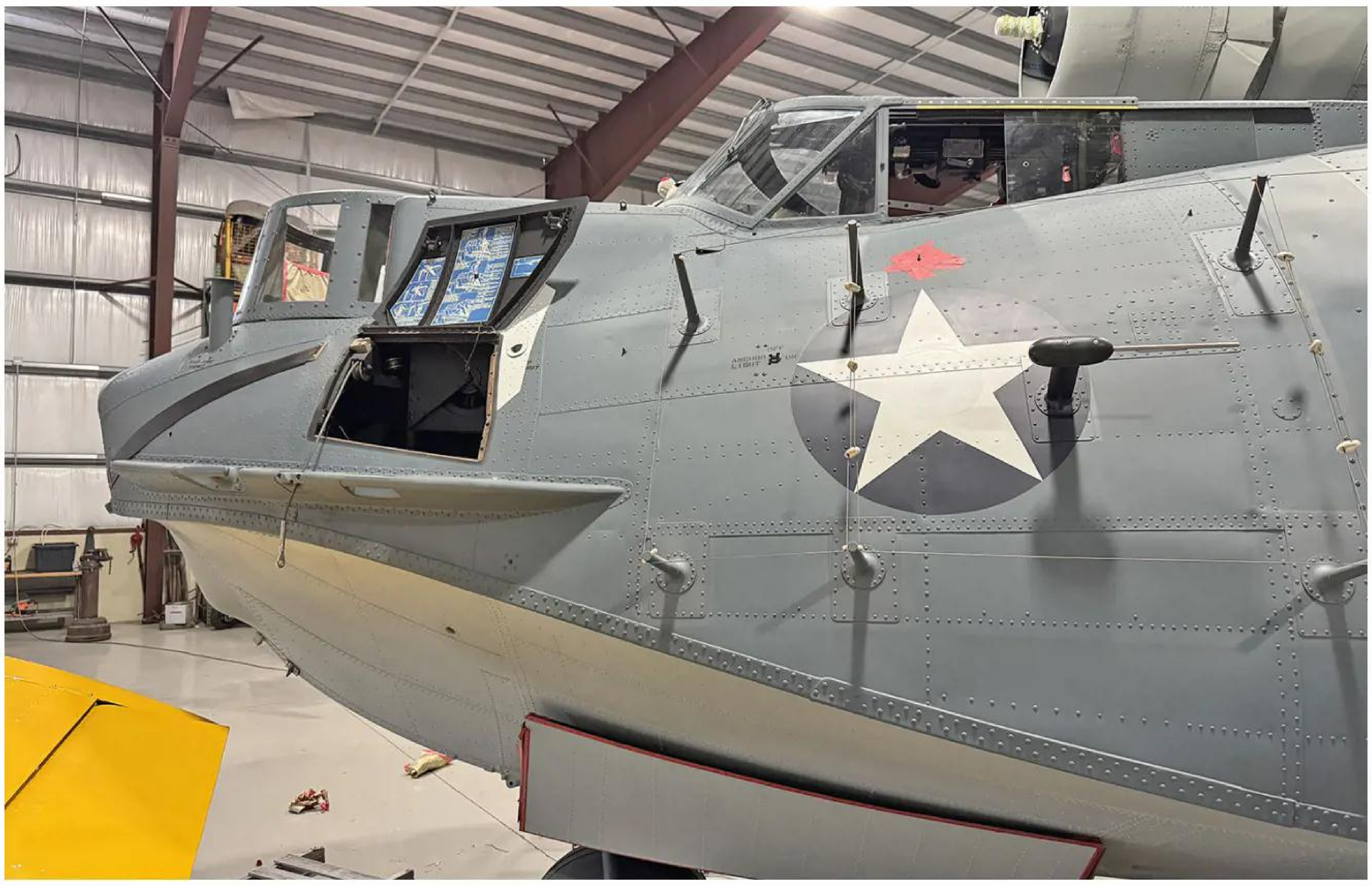
The Flight Engineer's position, located in the wing pylon, had been recreated. This unusual position allowed the FE to sit high over the cockpit and he had a window on each side to monitor the engines. The radio compartment was extremely important for wartime Cat missions and restoring this area has been difficult. Finding and restoring the early radio transmitter and receiver units along with the radar equipment has been a huge challenge for the restoration team. Custom fabrication of the mounts and shelves for the units is ongoing but the station is mainly complete with details such as a restored original spare equipment box. The cockpit has seen the installation of a rare instrument. It is the Mark 28 Torpedo Director. This is a detachable instrument that is an analog computing device which allowed the pilot to target an enemy vessel and compensate for movement and speed.

The nose of the Catalina has proven to be a great challenge. When the plane arrived, it was equipped with what has been called a clipper bow. All that is now gone and the area has been completely rebuilt to house the turret and bombardier position.

The exterior of the PBY-5A has now been fitted with the complex antenna array of the early variant of Air-Surface-Vessel radar as the aircraft wore during its time in Iceland. Some observers state this looks more like a clothes line than a modern radar set but this early deployment of airborne radar allowed the Navy to effectively hunt U-Boats No other surviving PBY has received this detailed of a rebuild.



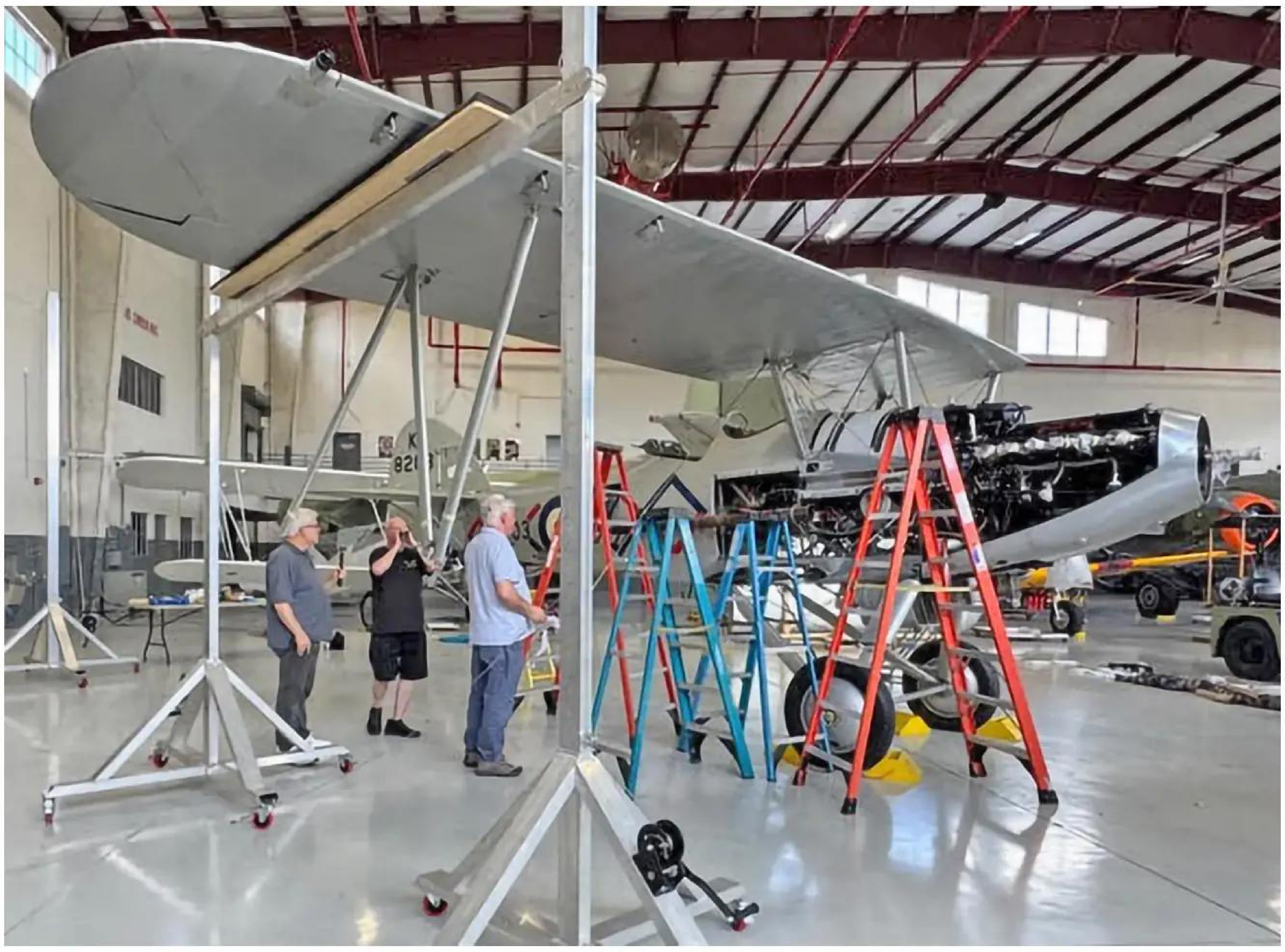
In-depth searching revealed many original items including this spares kit.

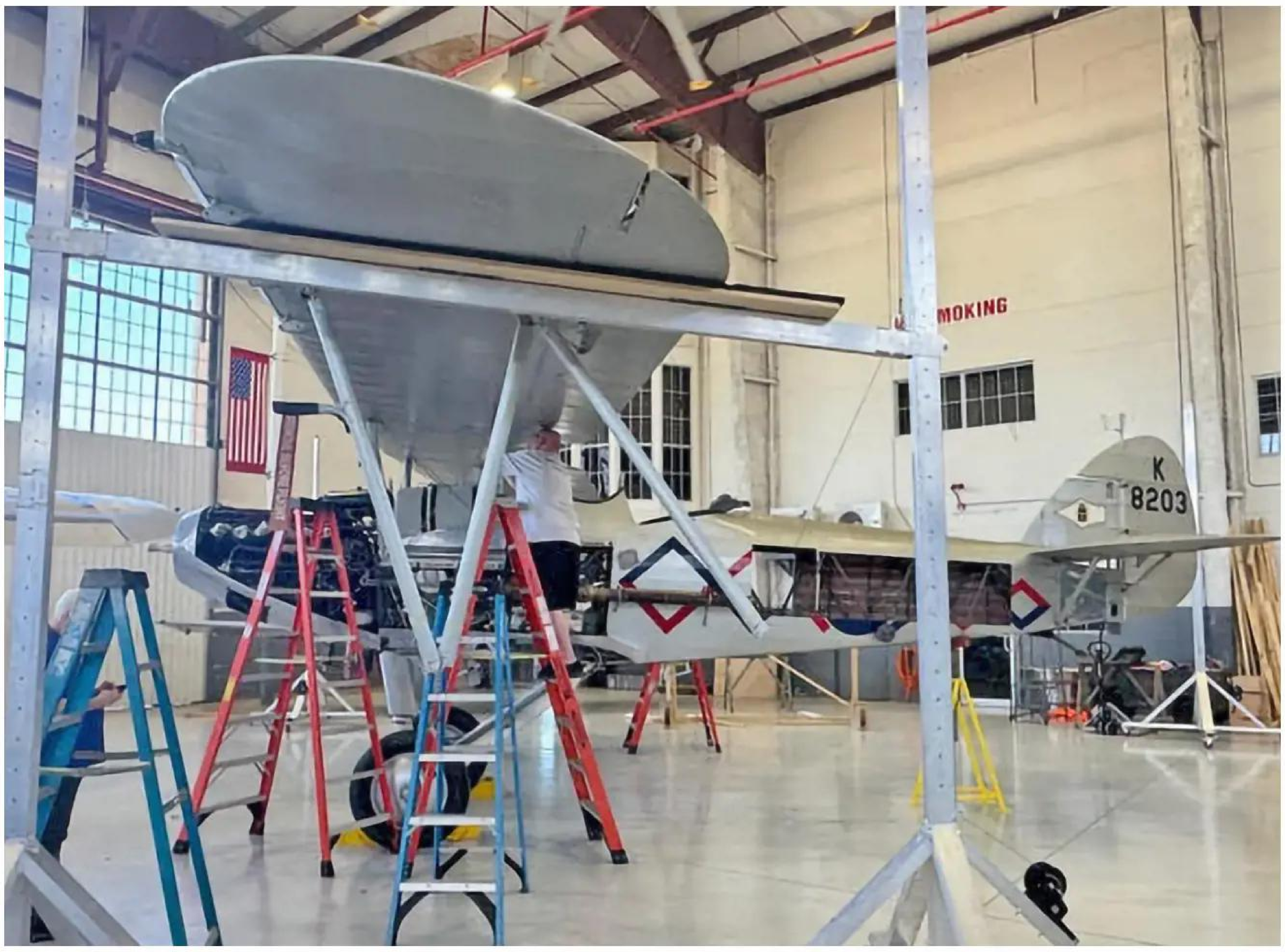


The complex mounts for the radar array in place on the fuselage.

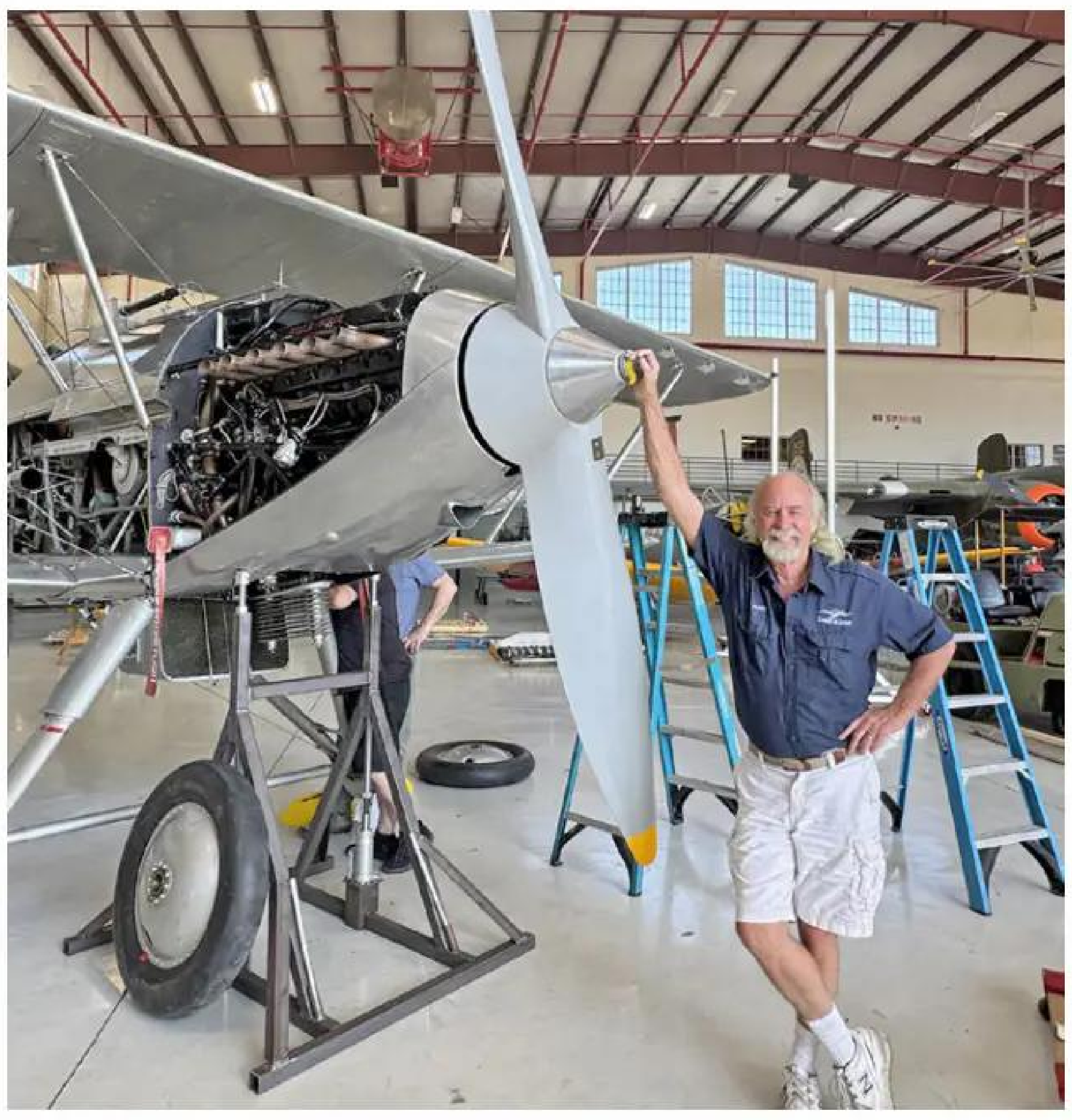
KERMIT GETS A DEMON

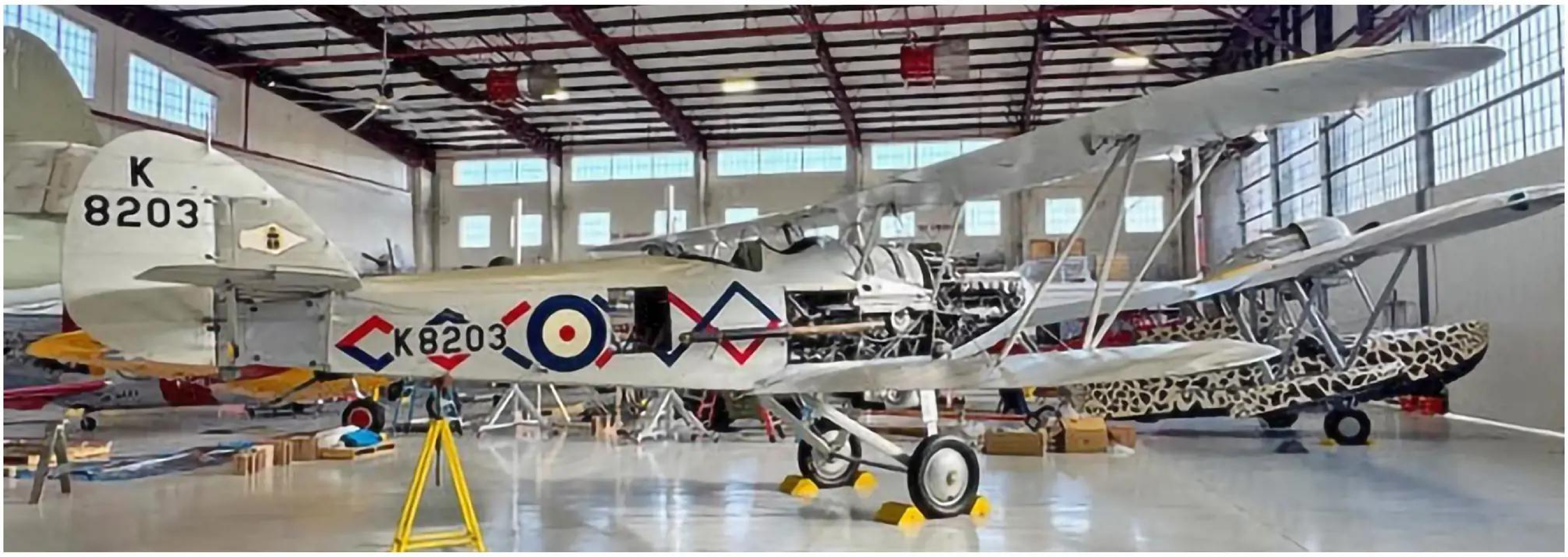
There is always something interesting going on at Kermit Weeks' Fantasy of Flight in Florida. The latest aircraft to arrive at the sprawling facility is an incredibly rare Hawker Demon — the epitome of Royal Air Force two-seat biplane fighters. During April, a team from the UK arrived at FoF to help assemble the aircraft and get it ready for flight. Martin Kimm and Steve Roberts, operating as Flying Restorations Ltd, were involved in the 18-year restoration under Tim Moore's company Skysport. Since completion, they have maintained the aircraft and were responsible for the disassembly and shipping the plane to Florida. Powered by a Rolls-Royce Kestrel engine (itself extremely rare), the Demon is a big plane. Dave Martin built stands from original drawings to support the wings while being attached to the fuselage and then came the task of attaching all the cables and other stuff — rigging on the classic biplane is complex. Then the Demon had to be jacked up to service the brakes, pre-oil the Kestrel, adding fuel, oil, coolant, and lots of final tweaking. The FAA will have to inspect the aircraft as it is licensed before a test flight in the near future. We will have more details on this rare bird in an upcoming issue. **AC**


Top wing in place as assembly of the Demon begins.



Top wing in place as assembly of the Demon begins.


Kermit displays the size of the Demon — it is a big aircraft. Note how beautifully the Kestrel engine is cowled.



All the wings attached and rigged.

WWII MYSTERY OF PATROL YACHT USS CYTHERA
JUNE 2025 · Vol.58/No.6
sea CLASSICS
Where History Sets Sail
THREE WARS OF SAINT PAUL
Heavy Cruiser's Gallant Service
GAMBLE AT LOS NEGROS
Invasion of Japanese-Held Island was Crucial Stepping-Stone in Pacific War
PAINTING WAR
More Historic US Navy Art Works
VIETNAM WAR: MYSTERY OF THE MISSING SWIFT BOAT
FINAL VOYAGE
DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ON THE DELTA
USS HARRY S. TRUMAN COLLISION
CANADA'S WORST MARITIME DISASTER
PRAYING MANTIS: DEADLY DAY FOR IRANIAN NAVY
AWAKING THE SLEEPING GIANT
VOYAGE OF THE VICIOUS VIXEN
USS CUBIA HEADS FOR OVERHAUL
HERO OF THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE
END OF A QUEEN
LOST AT SEA
TARGET AMERICA!
EPIC VOYAGE OF THE RAIDER WOLF
MEMPHIS VS. THE TIDAL WAVE
SHENANDOAH'S GLOBAL WAR
VOYAGES OF THE LETHAL LADY
USS WAHOO SS 238
END OF A QUEEN

WHERE HISTORY SETS SAIL!

EVERY MONTH *SEA CLASSICS* BRINGS YOU THE BEST IN MARITIME HISTORY

Now in its 58th year of publication, *Sea Classics* presents authoritative and insightful articles on all aspects of nautical history — from the great battles of WWII, to the historic commanders and admirals, to the magnificent clipper ships, to the deadly U-Boats, to the Civil War ironclads. Every month, *Sea Classics* brings you these types of articles… and much, much more!

SUBSCRIBE NOW TO *SEA CLASSICS* — REAL NAVAL HISTORY WITH NO REVISIONISM AND NO APOLOGIES!

SEA CLASSICS JUST $76.95 FOR TWELVE ISSUES!

○ Please rush my subscription of 12 issues for just $76.95

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

____

CITY ____________________

STATE ____________________ ZIP ____________________

SPECIAL! **Give a GIFT SUBSCRIPTION!**

○ Sign Up a Friend for Just $71.95 — A $5 Discount!

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

____

CITY ____________________

STATE ____________________ ZIP ____________________

○ Payment Enclosed
○ VISA
○ MasterCard
○ Renewal
○ New

ACCOUNT NUMBER ____________________

EXPIRATION DATE ________/________

SIGNATURE ____________________

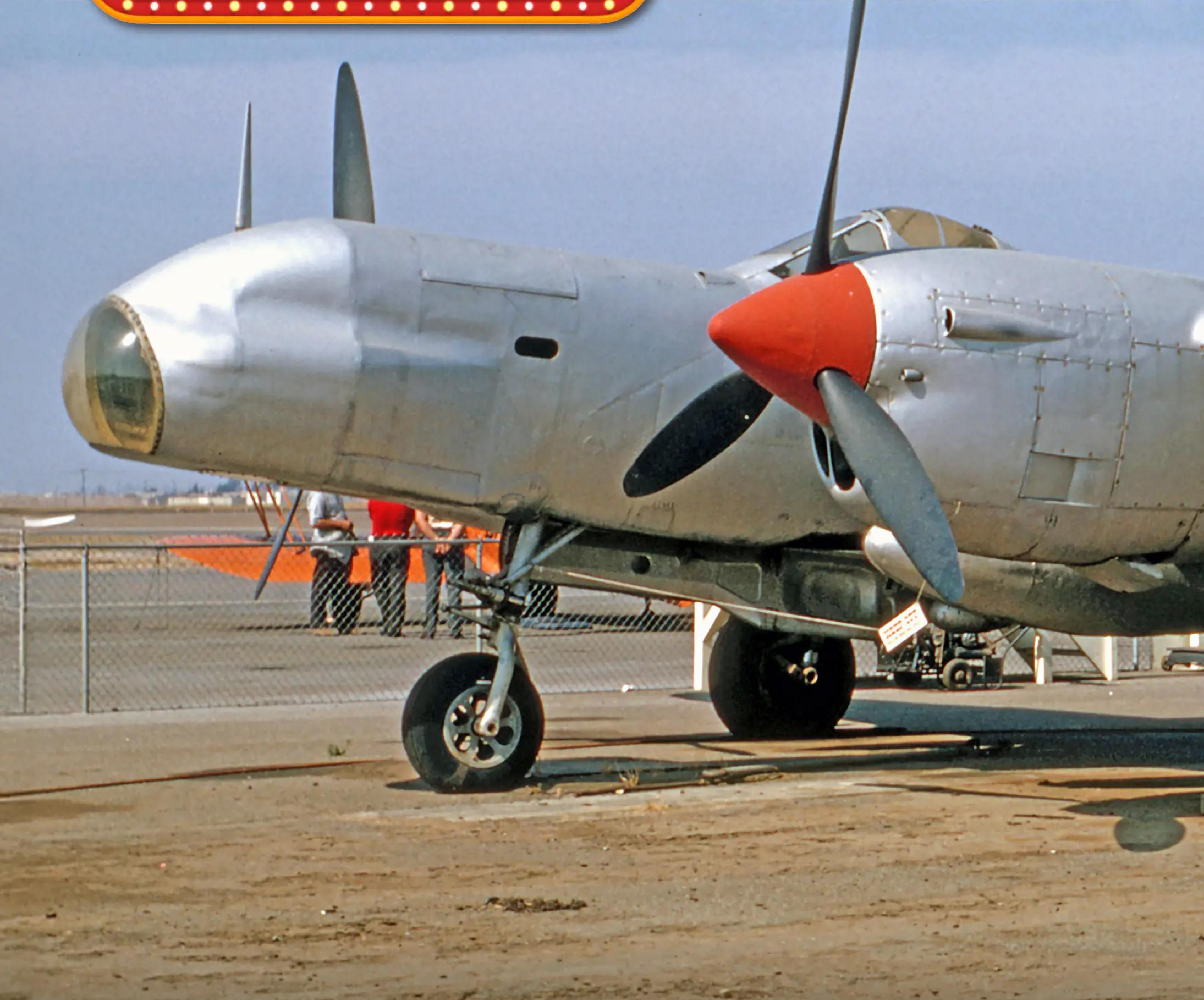
SEND TO: SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT
CHALLENGE PUBLICATIONS, INC.
P O BOX 2474
Chatsworth, CA 91311-2474 USA

For subscriptions mailed outside the US, please add $36 for a 12-issue subscription. Payment must be in US funds only.

FRIDAY NIGHT OLDIES

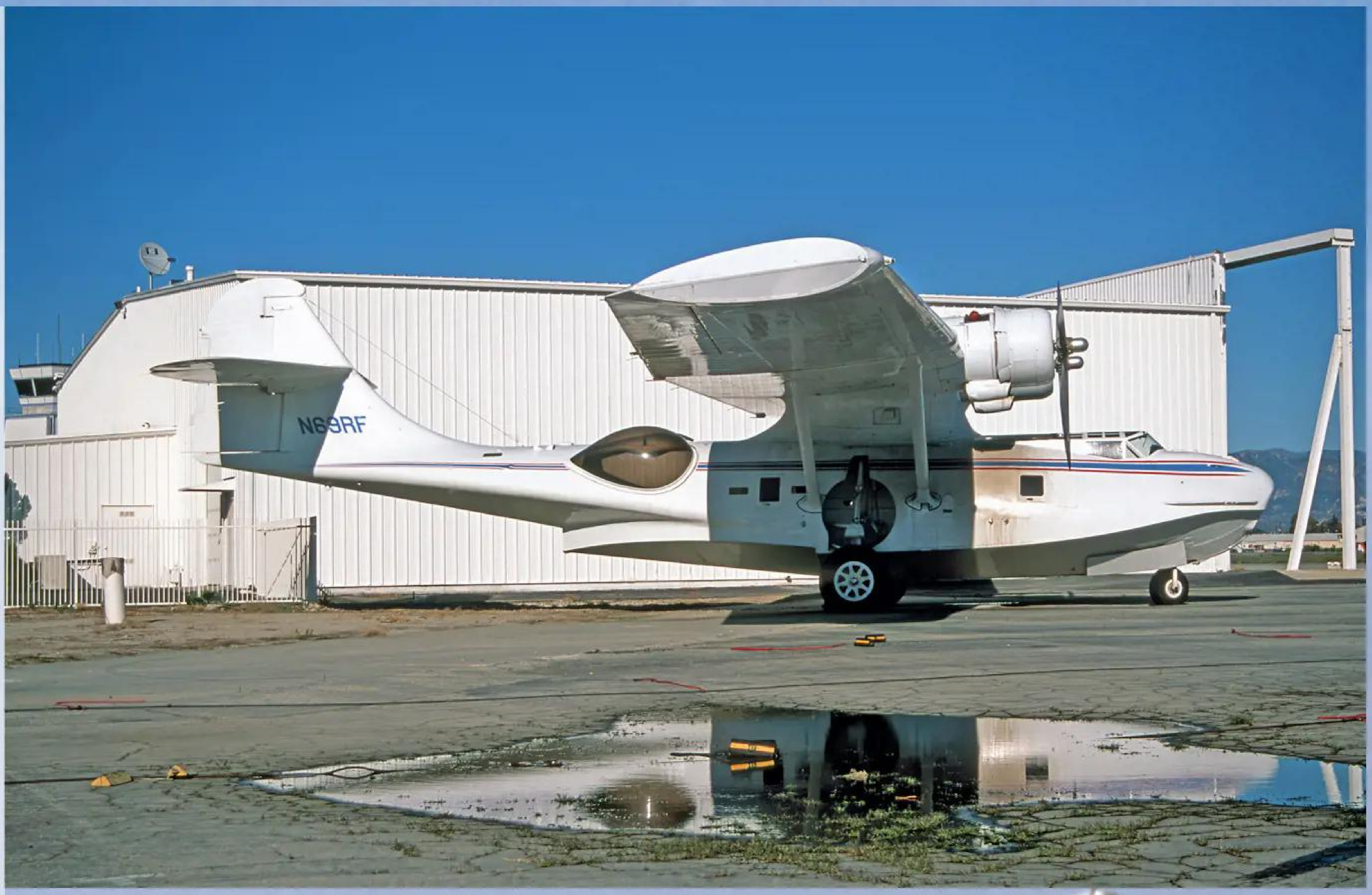
BY DOUG FISHER

SURPLUS EX-MILITARY AIRCRAFT LONG BEFORE THEY BECAME MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR RESTORATIONS

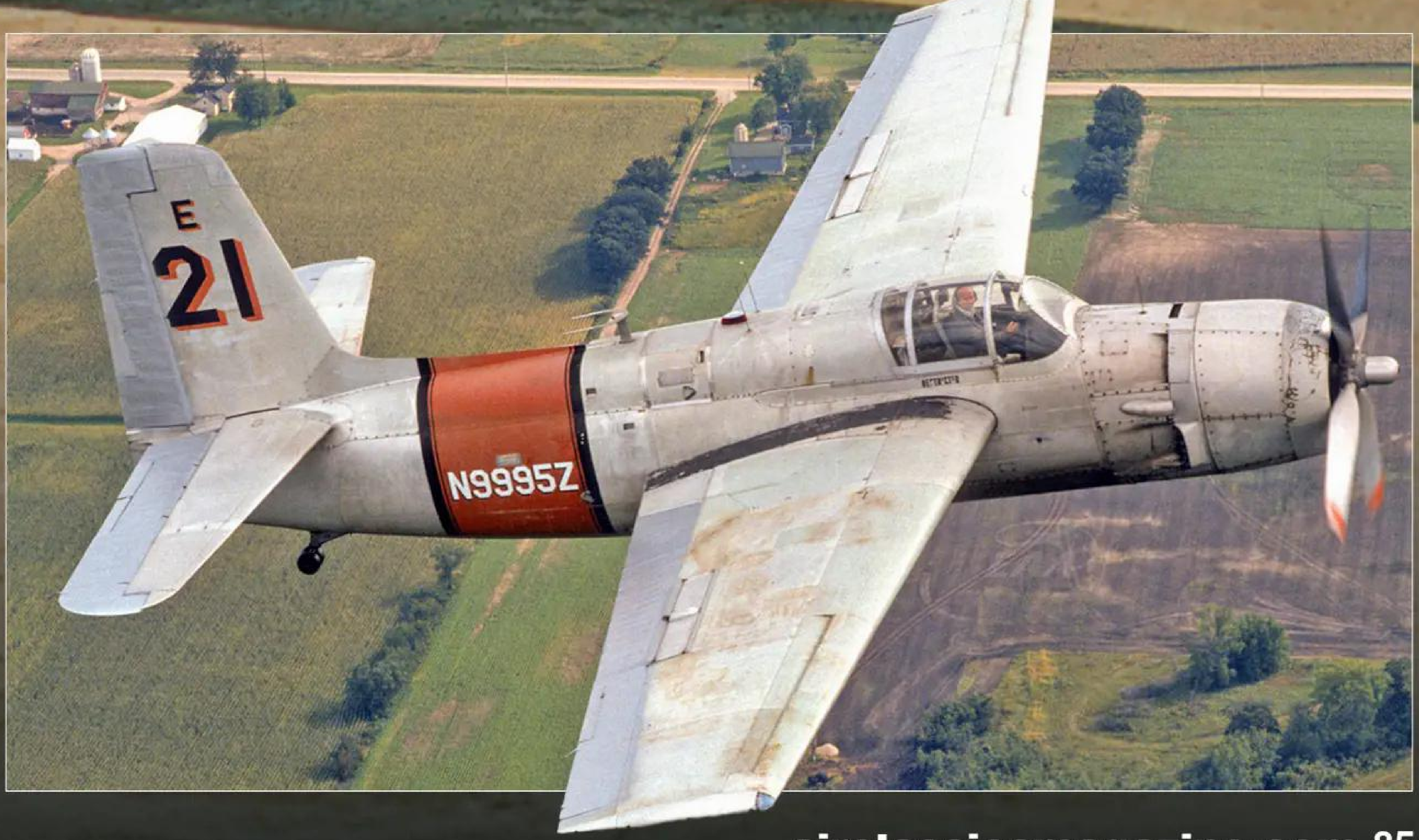


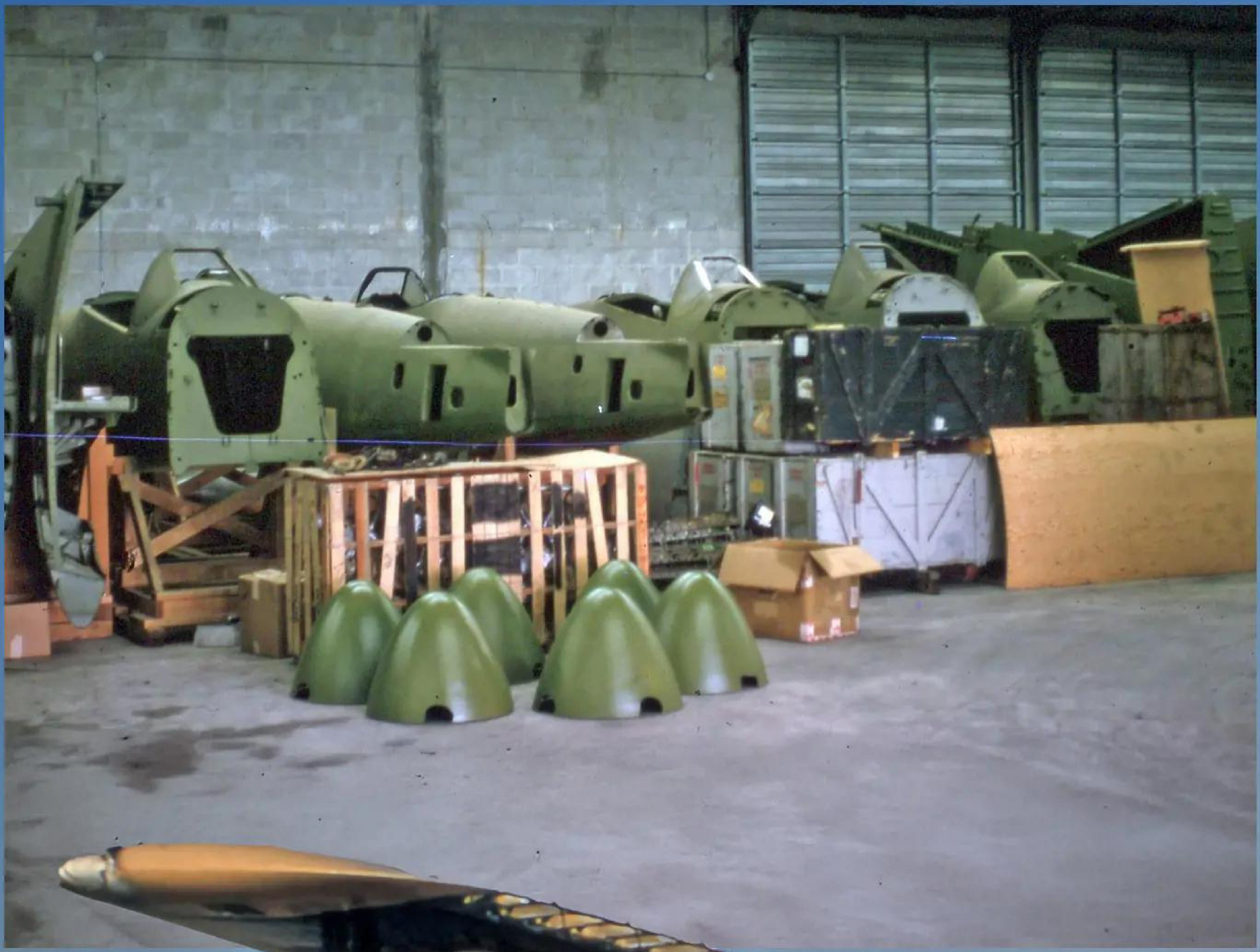
During the early 1970s, a visitor to Movieland of the Air at Orange County Airport in southern California could view a wide variety of rare aircraft parked outside. One of them was Lockheed F-5G USAAF 44-53015/N9957F. This aircraft was originally sold surplus from the huge storage facility at Kingman, Arizona, for $1250 with the intent of racing the craft at the newly-revived National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio. As Race 55 and named the *MacMillan Meteor*, the plane was flown in the cross-country Bendix by Indianapolis 500 race car driver Rex Mays. It was later acquired by Hycon and fitted with a greatly extended nose to house cameras and the equipment operator. By the time it appeared at Orange County, the aircraft was looking definitely tired. At the time, the Lightning had a limited monetary value and civilian Mustangs were selling for more than a P-38, even though the twin-boomed fighter was extremely rare. Collector David Tallichet was beginning his extensive collection and he made a deal to purchase N9957F and after a considerable amount of work to get it into ferry shape, the plane was flown to his facility at Chino Airport. The aircraft was eventually involved in a trade with the USAF and the rare Lightning is now unfortunately mounted on a pylon and rotting in the weather at McGuire AFB.

Sometimes a simple paint scheme is the best. Based at Van Nuys Airport for several years, this immaculate Catalina was owned by the late Robert Franks. Configured as an "air yacht," the aircraft was regularly flown. Registered N69RF, the Cat was originally built as a PBV-1A by Canadian Vickers and operated as RCAF 11074. Sold surplus in 1961, it was modified to airliner configuration and registered as C-FOWE and flew with Ontario Central Airlines and Ilford Riverton Airways. Franks purchased the plane in 1983 as N691RF and used it in the commemorative flight to celebrate the US Navy's crossing the Atlantic with Curtiss NC flying boats. However, arriving at Plymouth, England, it was very heavily damaged in a water loop on 30 May 1986. This led to an extensive rebuild. Today, the plane is with a new owner and star and bar markings have been added to the aircraft.

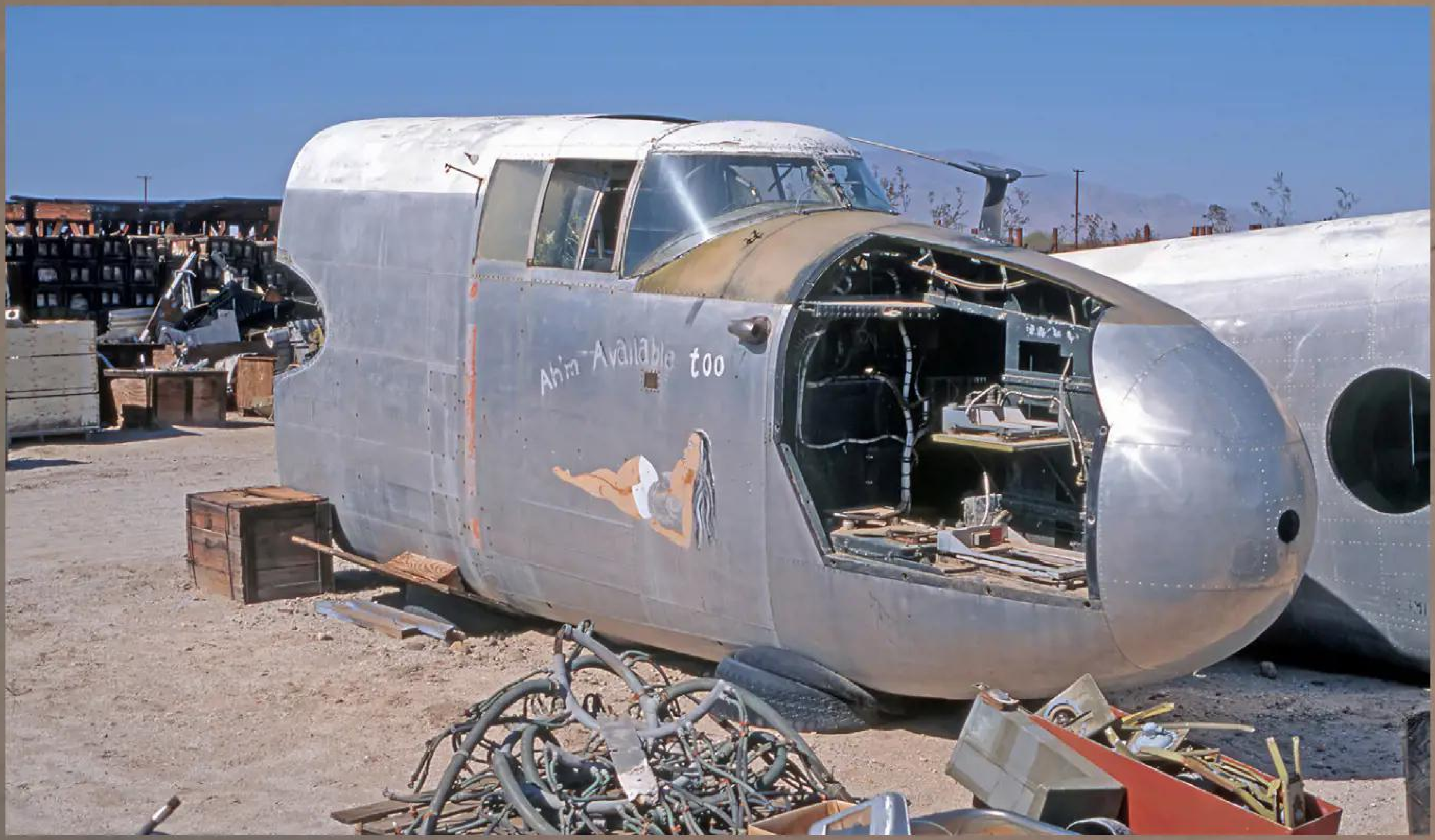


Too bad there is not one of these beasts flying on today's airshow circuit. The Grumman AF-2 series was designed as a carrier-based "hunter-killer" team to track down early Cold War submarines with one aircraft doing the searching and the other undertaking the attacking. The only reason that we have any surviving examples is that fire-bomber operators thought the type might make a good aerial tanker. Powered by a R-3350, only a few planes made it on to the civil register and one of those was AF-2S BuNo 126792. With Aero Union out of Chico, California, the Guardian carried the civil registration N9995Z and flew as Tanker 21. It was eventually acquired by the late Jimmy Leeward who was putting it back into flying condition when he was killed in the crash of *Galloping Ghost* at the Reno National Air Races. Currently, the project is being offered for sale.



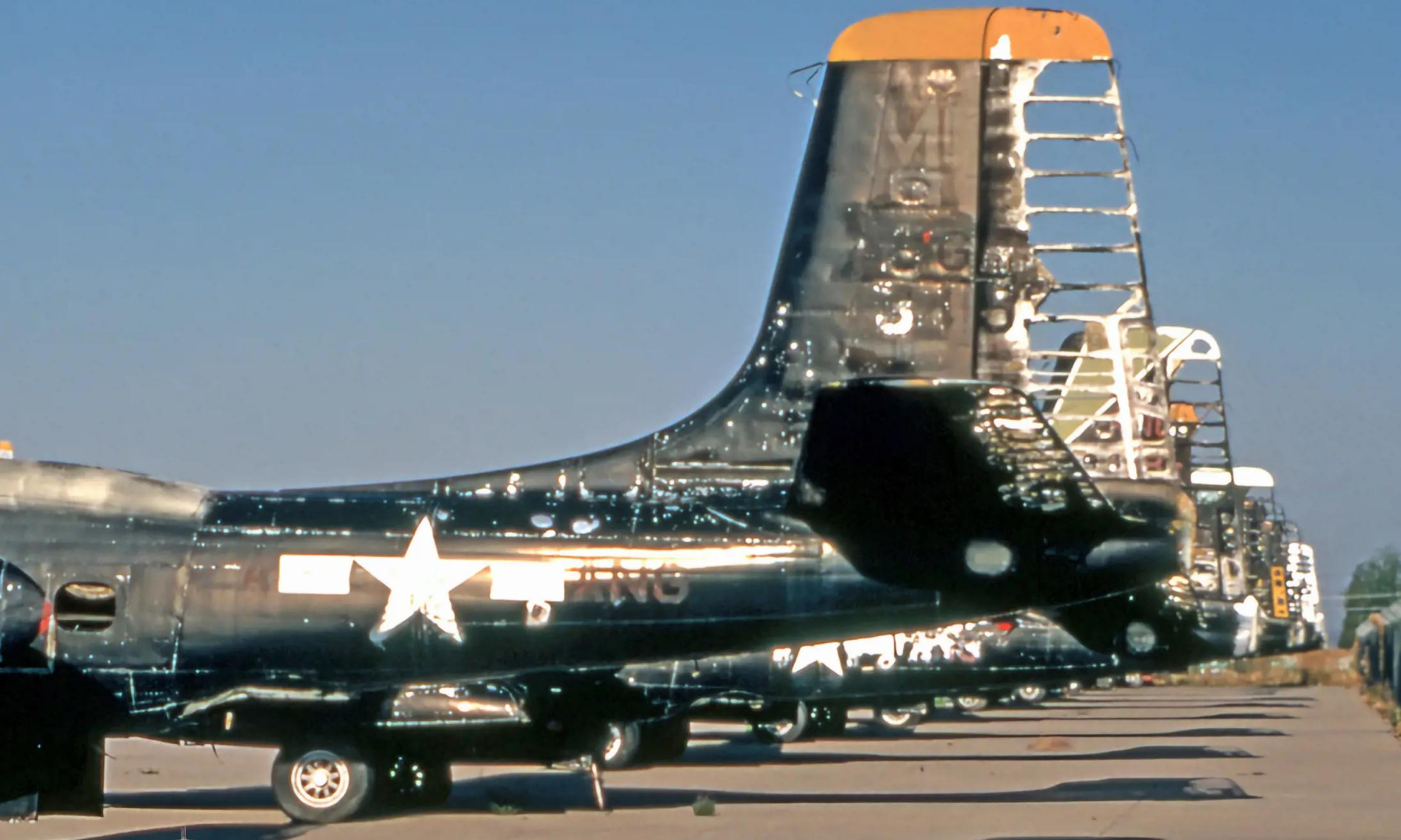


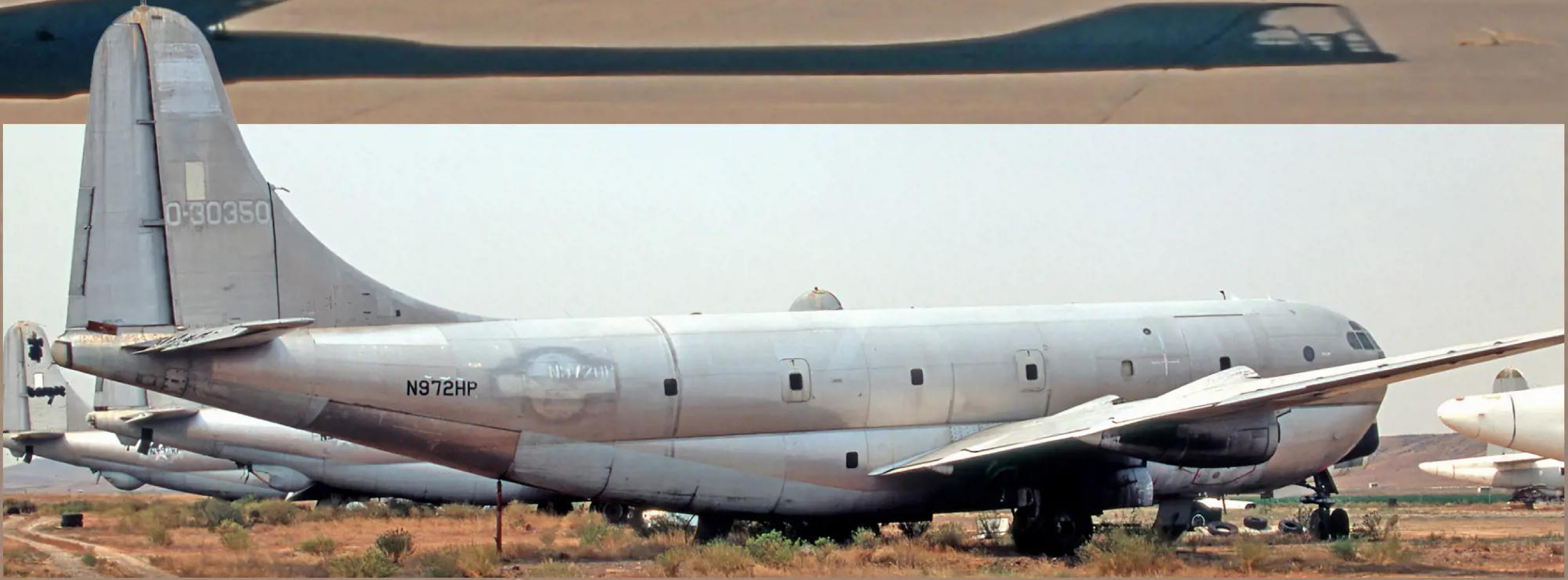
Another collection of airframes, but this time we have to head east to Sarasota, Florida. During the 1970s, Cavalier Aircraft was kept busy creating Mustangs for the private flyer as well as air forces still flying the type. Michael O'Leary did an extensive taped interview with owner David Lindsey who commented, "At the time I just did not keep much in the way of records when it came to individual airframes. When we would purchase aircraft for future use, we would usually disassemble the plane, strip it of paint, spray it chromate for preservation, and then place it in storage. When an order came in, then we would pick the best fuselage [the easiest to work on], best wings, flaps, etc. Then the aircraft would be assembled to the owner's specifications and away it would go." This did not apply to Mustangs that were brought in by owners wanting their aircraft overhauled or finished to one of the Cavalier models. Those aircraft would retain the major components and identities with which they had arrived. This view shows six disassembled and stored Mustangs in the Cavalier facility.



While we are on the subject of stored Warbirds, then we have to include at least one Mitchell from the half-dozen or so airframes from the fabled Aero Trader desert storage facility in southern California. *I'm Available Too* is B-25J USAAF 45-8887/N3680G that was sold in one of the late 1950s Mitchell auctions at Davis-Monthan AFB. The aircraft ended by with Isaac Newton "Junior" Burchinal at his facility in Paris, Texas, where Junior was kept busy operating the local diner, being a preacher, giving instruction in Warbirds, and drug running. On 21 December 1976, the aircraft made an off-airport landing at Vega, Texas, where the gear suffered a partial collapse. Left in place, the crew took off, and the Mitchell was seized for drug running. Acquired by Carl Scholl, it was disassembled and trucked to Aero Trader's desert location.

At Tucson International Airport, Hamilton Aircraft could always be relied upon for having something interesting parked on their vast ramp area. Today, Hamilton and all those aircraft are unfortunately long gone, but during the early 1970s there were dozens upon dozens of Douglas Invaders parked at the facility. For the most part, these aircraft had come from nearby Davis-Monthan AFB where they had been in storage prior to public auctions. Hamilton did a lot of work on Invaders — both military and civilian — and one of their more interesting projects was a contract to prepare B-26s for the Brazilian Air Force during the late 1960s. Their storage facility provided lots of airframe and engine parts. As can be seen, the Invaders were neatly parked and constituted a variety of solid nose and glass nose variants. Most of the Invaders in this photo were painted black but in the group, there were also a number of airframes that wore an overall USAF sprayed aluminum finish. Sadly, when the company determined there was no future market for these airframes, they were mainly scrapped with only a couple aircraft being purchased by collectors.

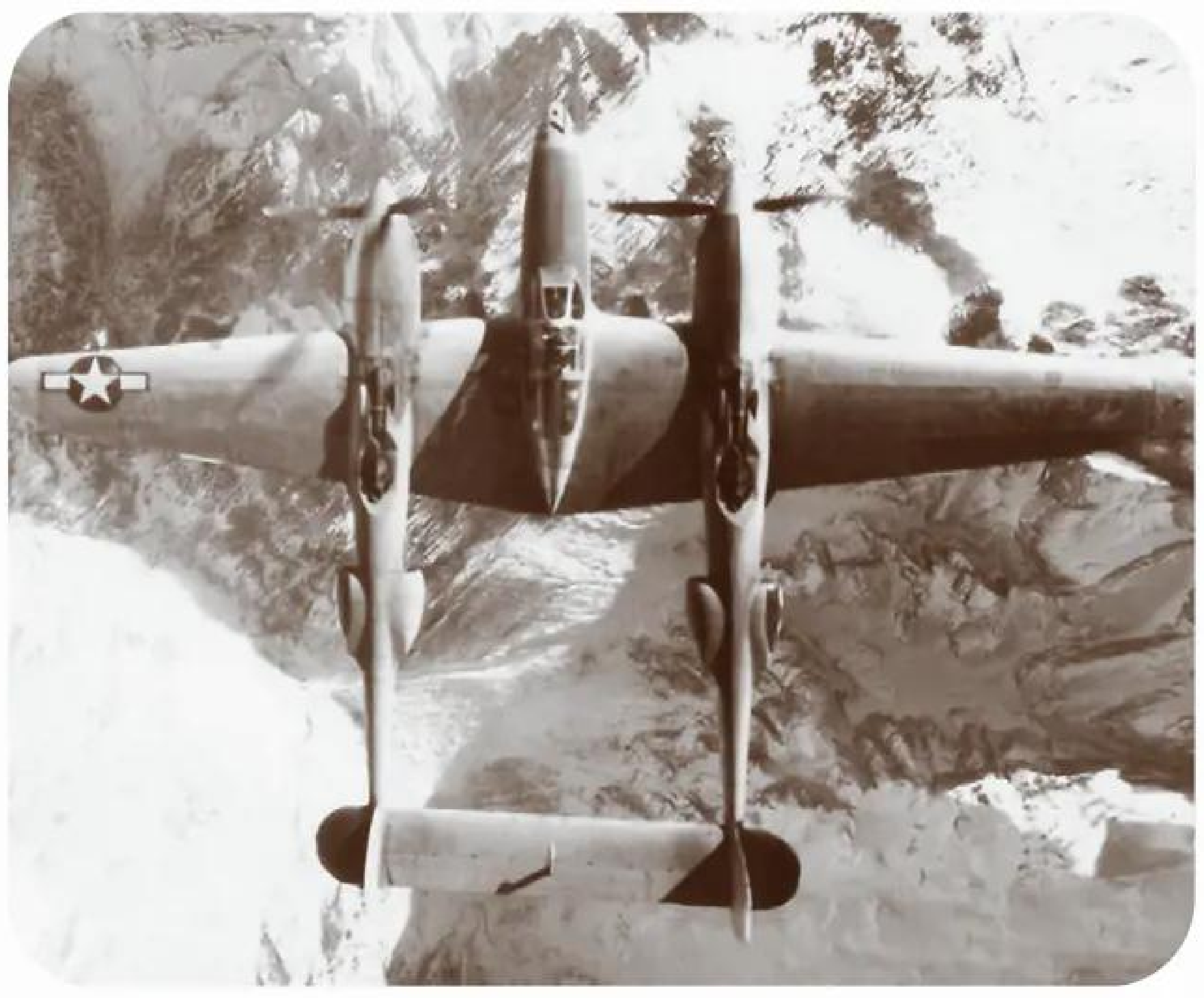


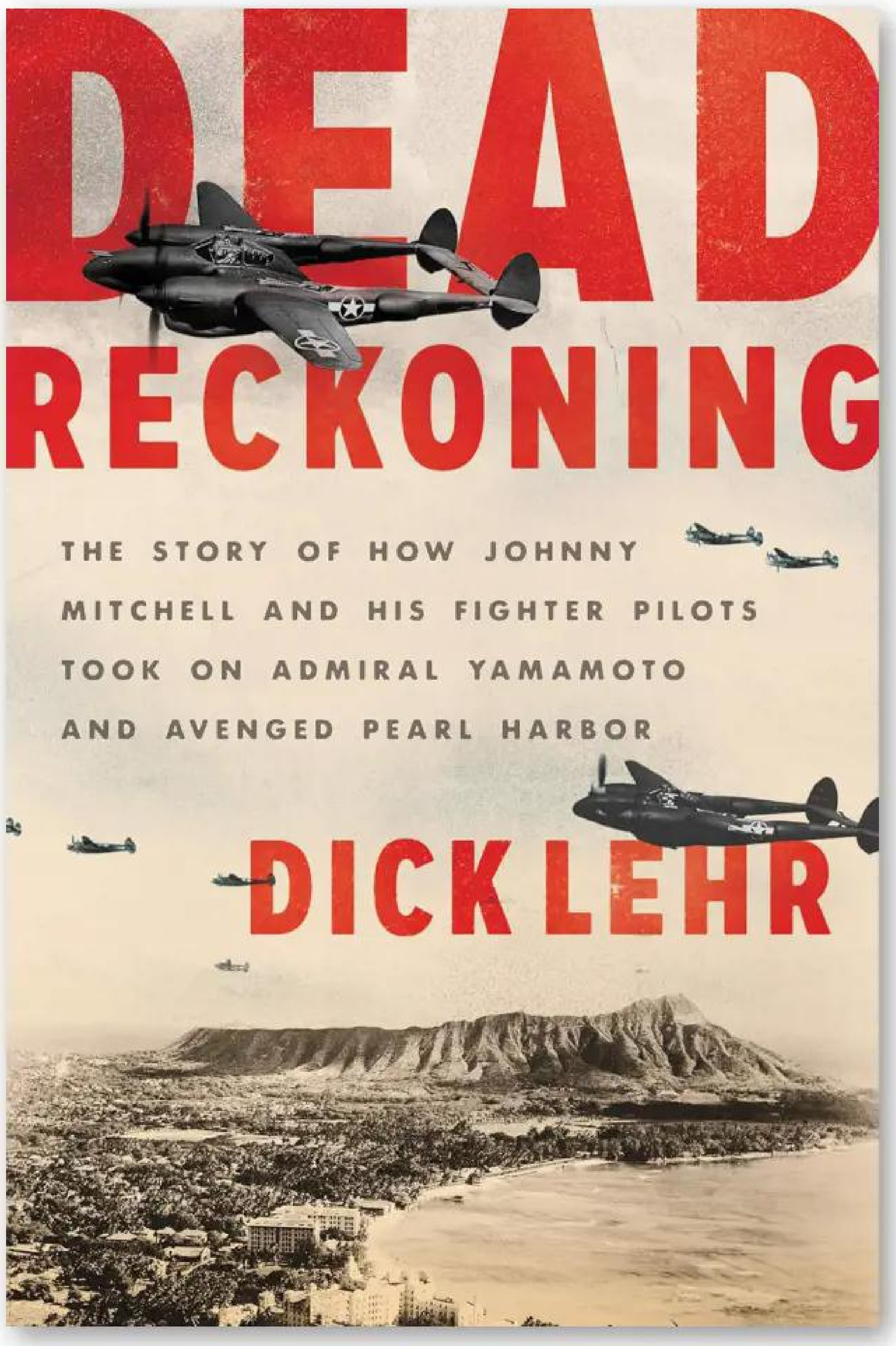


As we have mentioned numerous times, one of the great independent fire-bombing outfits was Hawkins & Powers located in Greybull, Wyoming. Over the years, the company built a vast fleet of P-2 Neptunes, C-119 Flying Boxcars, PB4Y Privateers, and C-97 Stratofreighters/Stratotankers. When the US government unfairly stepped in and banned “vintage” aircraft from being used to fight fires, the company was forced to shut down. Today, the majority of the fleet still sits parked at Greybull but the aircraft are under threat since the local government wants them gone. If they had a brain, they would make the airfield an attraction since it is about the only thing of interest in the area. This line-up of Boeings is led by KC-97L Stratofreighter 53-350/N972HP. The aircraft led a long life with the USAF and ANG and last saw service with the Texas ANG. Originally sold at auction at Davis-Monthan AFB in 1980, the plane became N8516Y. When acquired by H&P, it was converted into the unique Boeing/Hawkins & Powers HP-B-377 and was the only C-97 variant to obtain a Special Type Certificate allowing it to operate hauling outsized cargo, much in the same manner that the Douglas C-133s in Alaska were utilized. **AC**

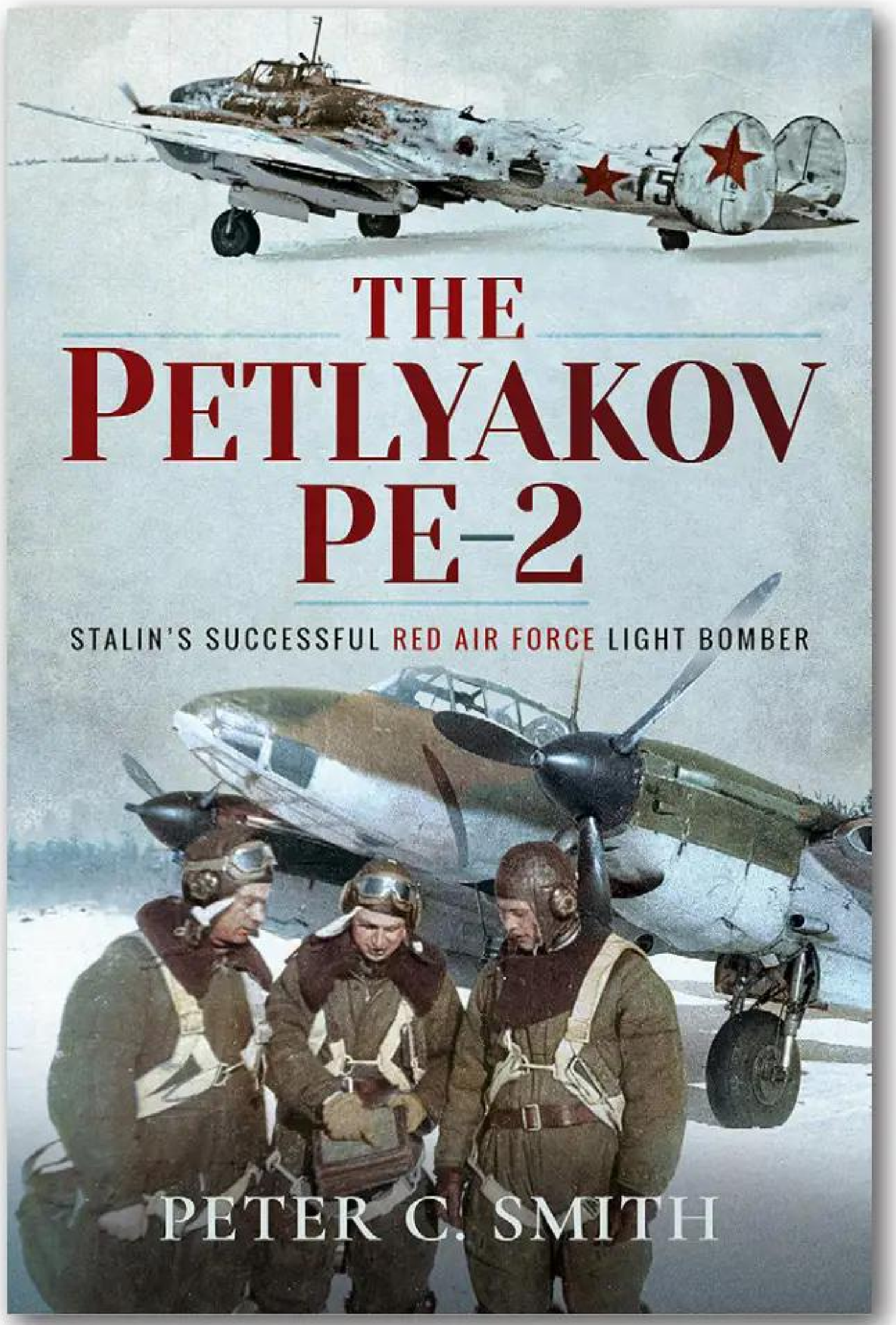
NEW TITLES FROM THE
AVIATION BOOK CLUB!

The Aviation Book Club (ABC) is pleased to present an extensive selection of books that will fit into any discerning aviation library. All books are carefully chosen by our staff and our contributors. Also, we are offering great discounts on all titles

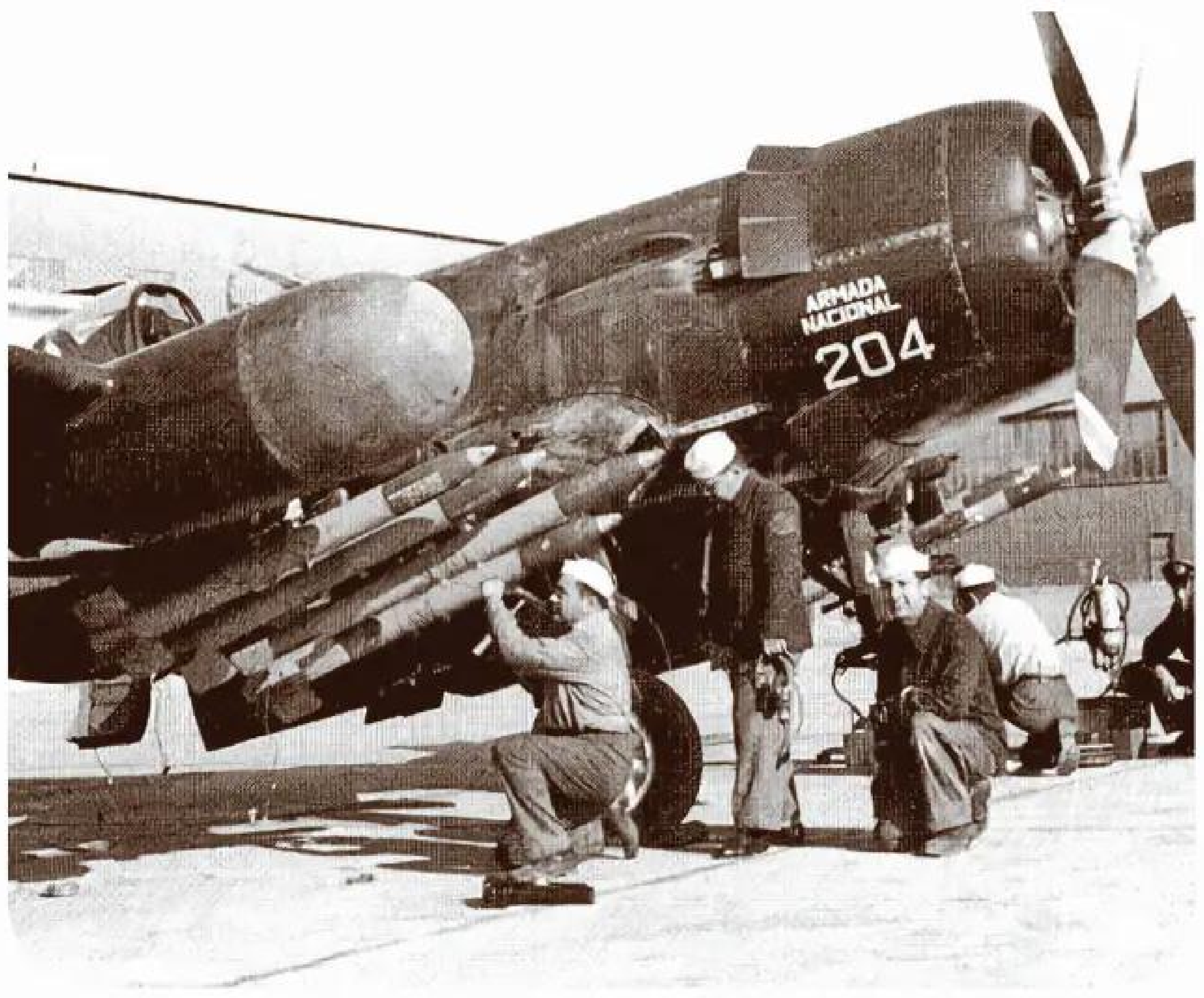


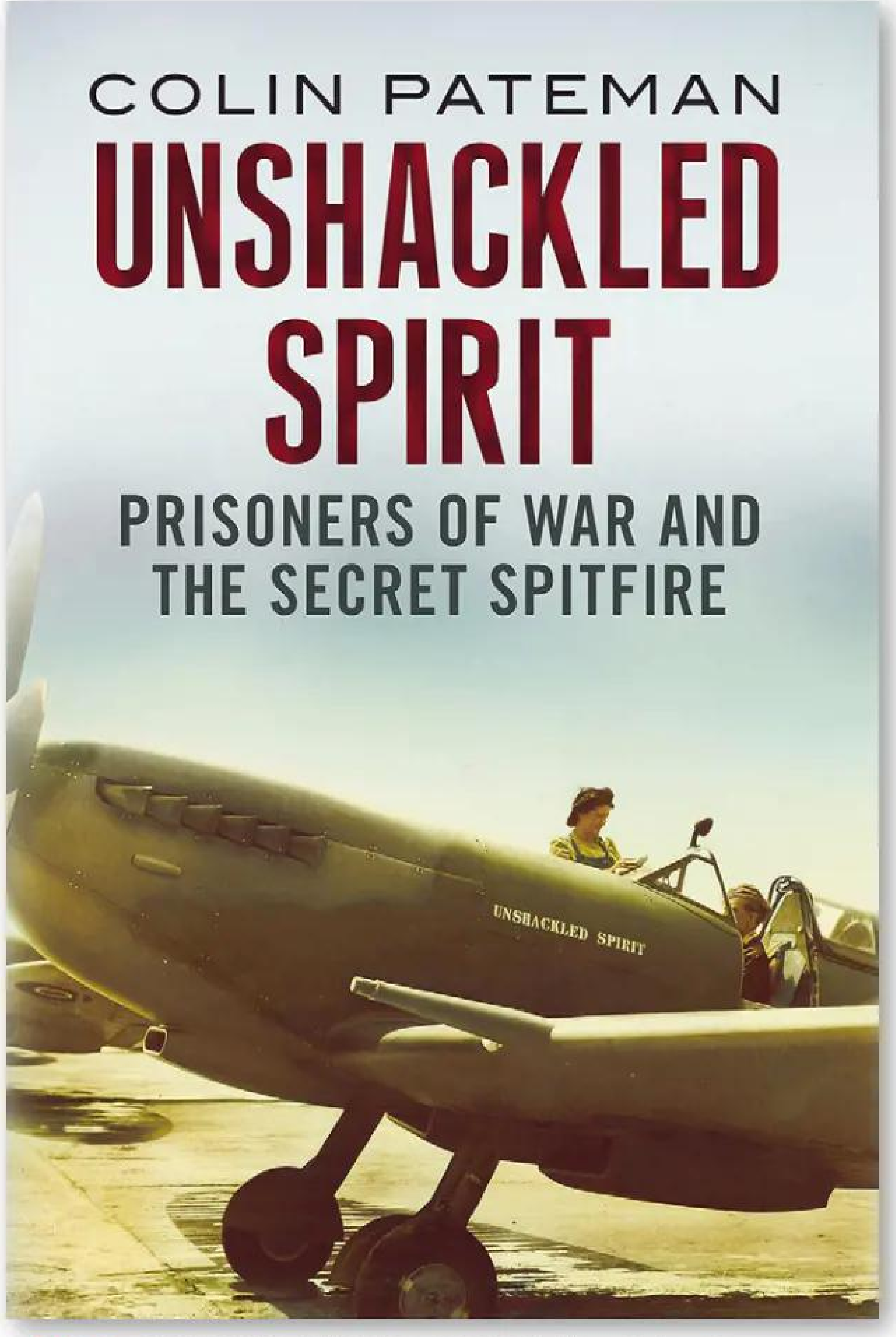

DEAD
RECKONING
THE STORY OF HOW JOHNNY MITCHELL AND HIS FIGHTER PILOTS TOOK ON ADMIRAL YAMAMOTO AND AVENGED PEARL HARBOR
DICK LEHR

001: DEAD RECKONING by Dick Lehr. Hardbound, 400 pages. How Johnny Mitchell and his P-38 fighter pilots killed Adm. Yamamoto and avenged Pearl Harbor. PUB AT $28.99, NOW $21

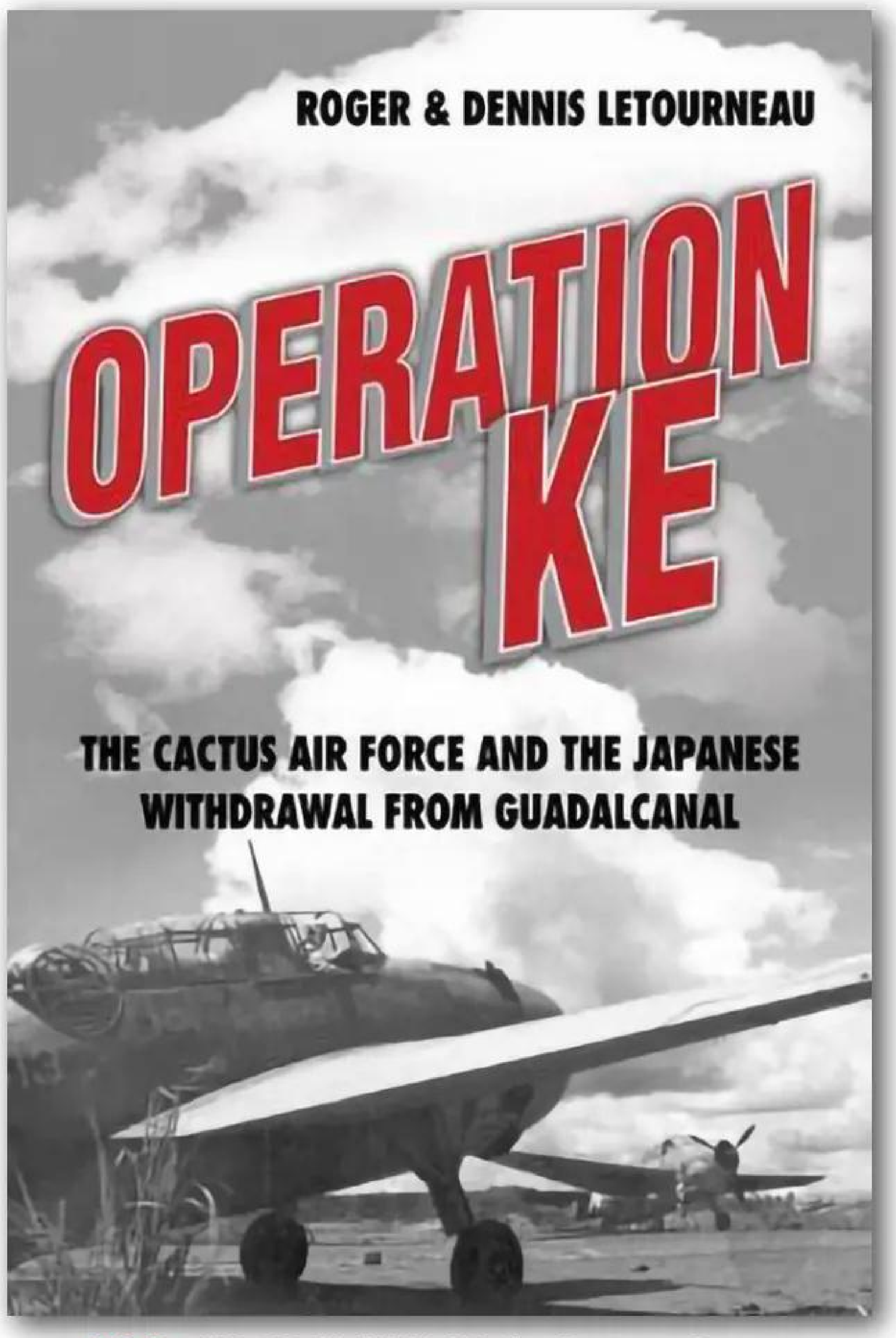

THE
PETLYAKOV
PE-2
STALIN'S SUCCESSFUL RED AIR FORCE LIGHT BOMBER
PETER C. SMITH

002: THE PETLYAKOV PE-2 by Peter C. Smith. Hardbound, 436 pages. For the first time, the complete history of the Red Air Force's most successful light bomber. PUB AT $42.95, NOW $32


ARMADA NACIONAL
204


COLIN PATEMAN
UNSHACKLED
SPIRIT
PRISONERS OF WAR AND THE SECRET SPITFIRE
UNSHACKLED SPIRIT

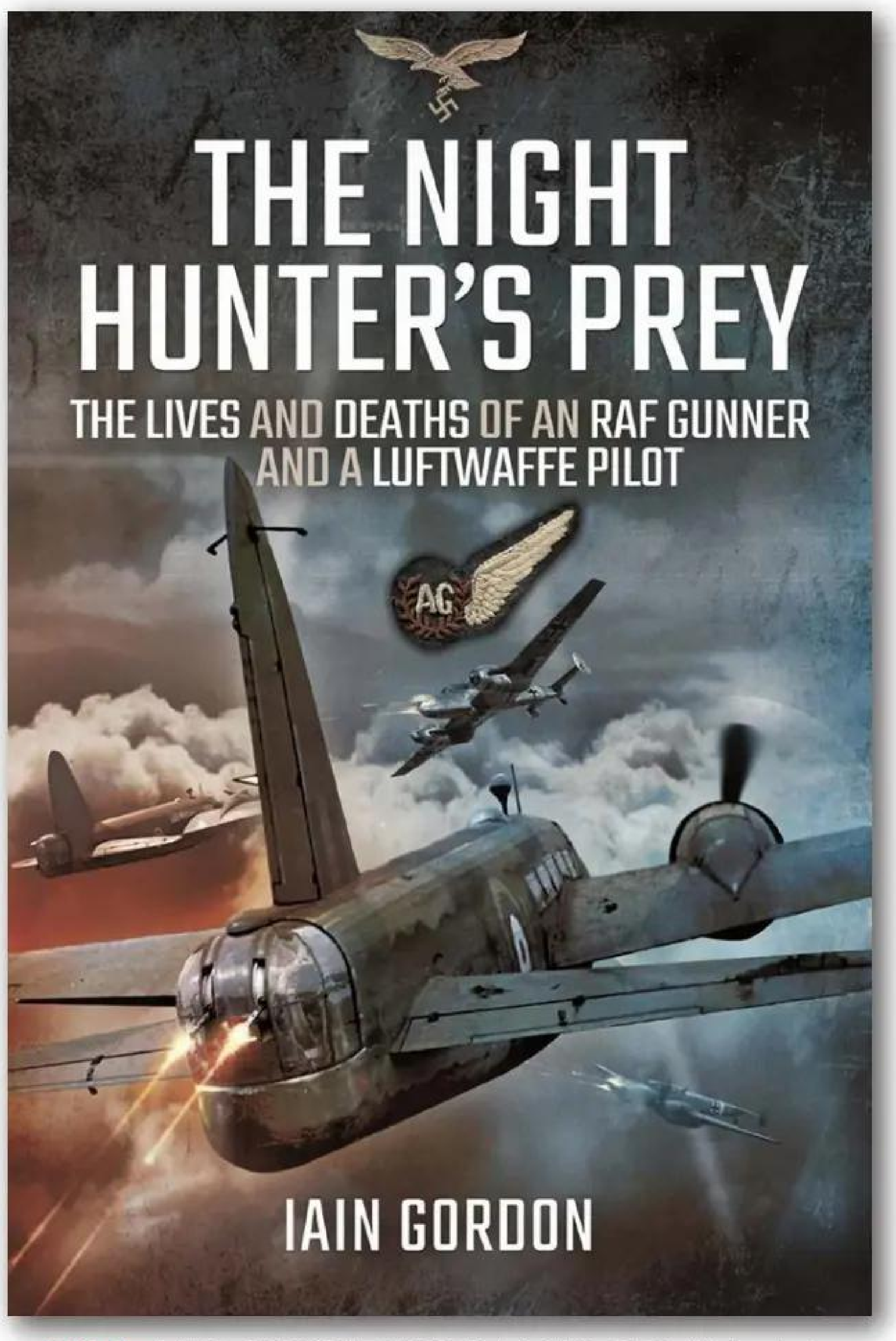
003: UNSHACKLED SPIRIT by Colin Pateman. Hardbound, 320 pages. Story of POWs and a Spitfire named *Unshackled Spirit.* PUB at $29.95, NOW $22


ROGER & DENNIS LETOURNEAU
OPERATION
KE
THE CACTUS AIR FORCE AND THE JAPANESE WITHDRAWAL FROM GUADALCANAL

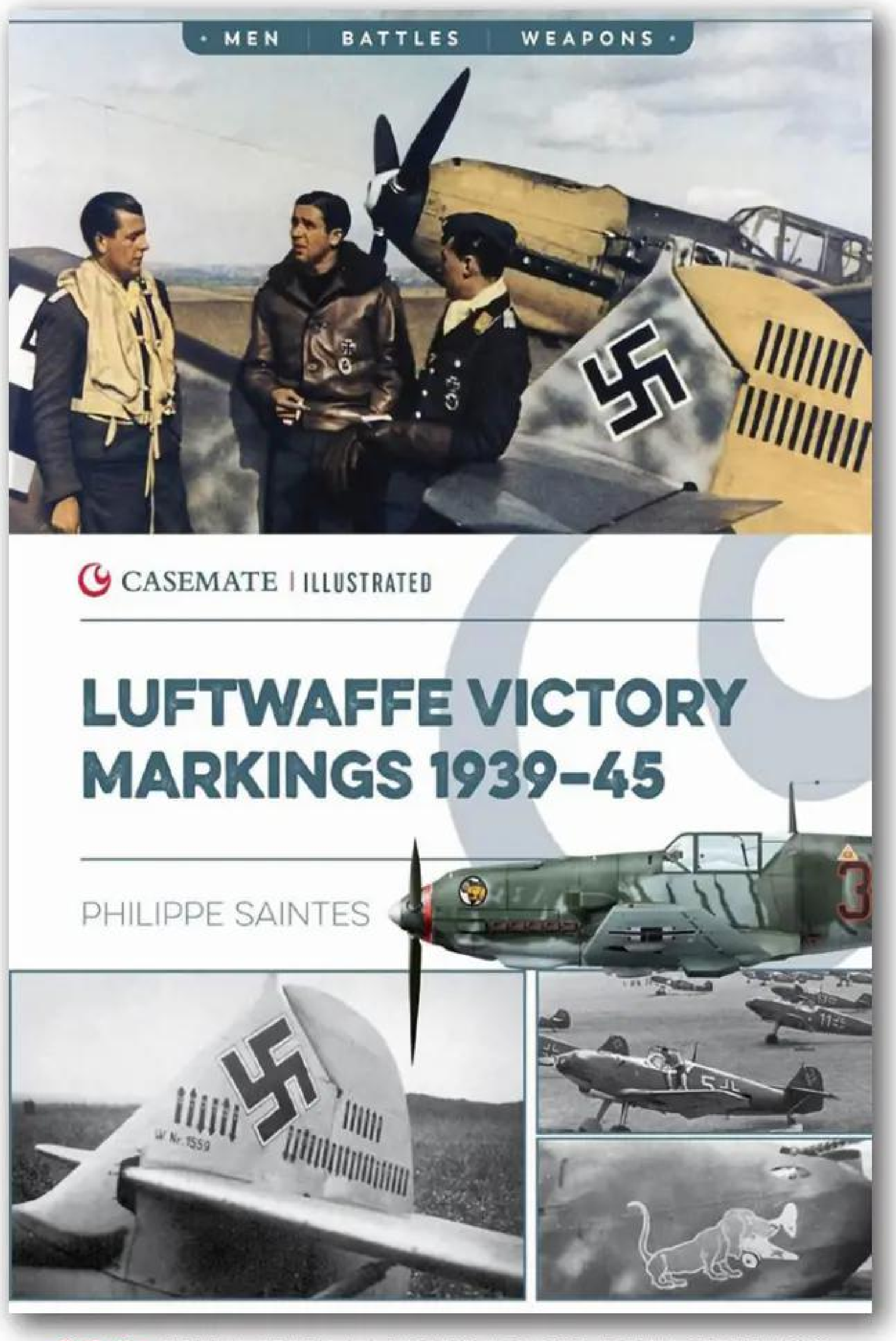
004: OPERATION KE by Roger & Dennis Letourneau. Hardbound, 370 pages. The Cactus Air Force at war on Guadalcanal and the Japanese withdrawal from that island. PUB AT $42.95, NOW $32

EXTRA DISCOUNT!

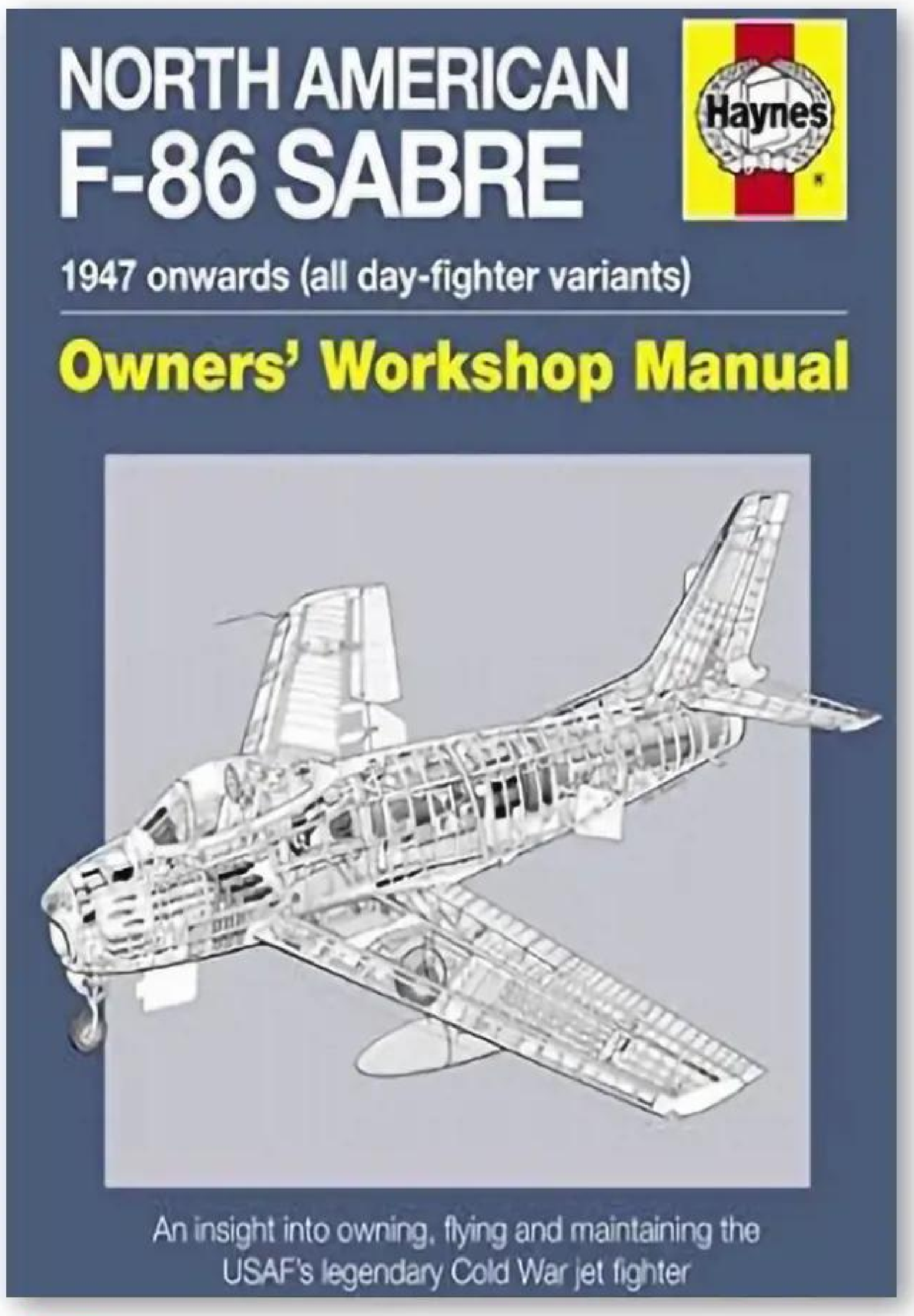
BUY OVER $100 AND TAKE OFF AN ***ADDITIONAL 10%***


THE NIGHT HUNTER'S PREY
THE LIVES AND DEATHS OF AN RAF GUNNER AND A LUFTWAFFE PILOT
IAIN GORDON

005: THE NIGHT HUNTER'S PREY by Iain Gordon. The lives and deaths of an 'RAF gunner and a *Luftwaffe* pilot. Hardbound, 272 pages, illustrated. PUB AT $39.95, NOW $22


MEN | BATTLES | WEAPONS
CASEMATE | ILLUSTRATED
LUFTWAFFE VICTORY MARKINGS 1939–45
PHILIPPE SAINTES

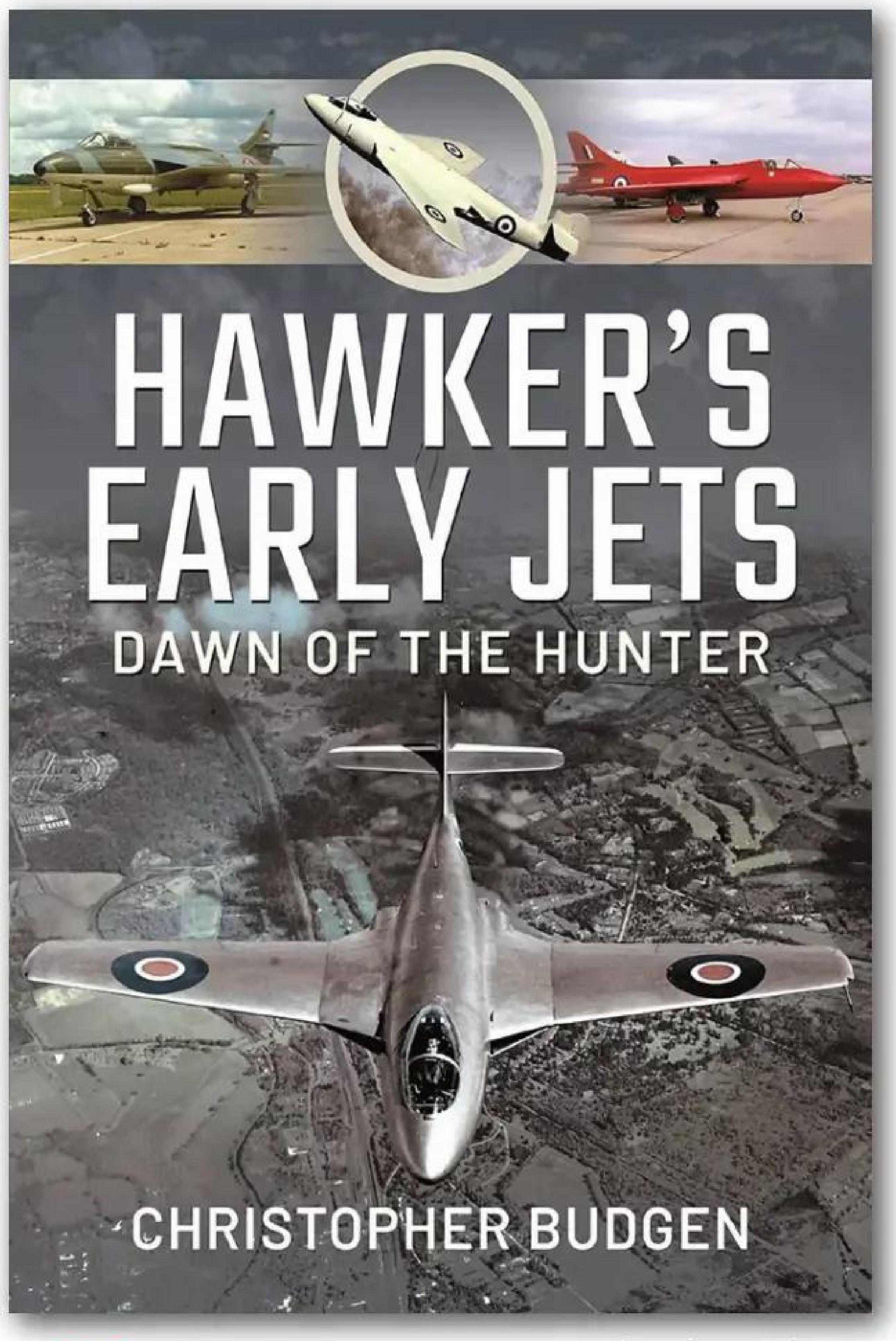
006: LUFTWAFFE VICTORY MARKINGS by Phillippe Saintes. Essential WWII reference guide to German aircraft victory tallies on aircraft. Hardbound, 192 pages, heavily-illustrated. PUB AT $39.95, NOW $25


NORTH AMERICAN F-86 SABRE
Haynes
1947 onwards (all day-fighter variants)
Owners' Workshop Manual
An insight into owning, flying and maintaining the USAF's legendary Cold War jet fighter

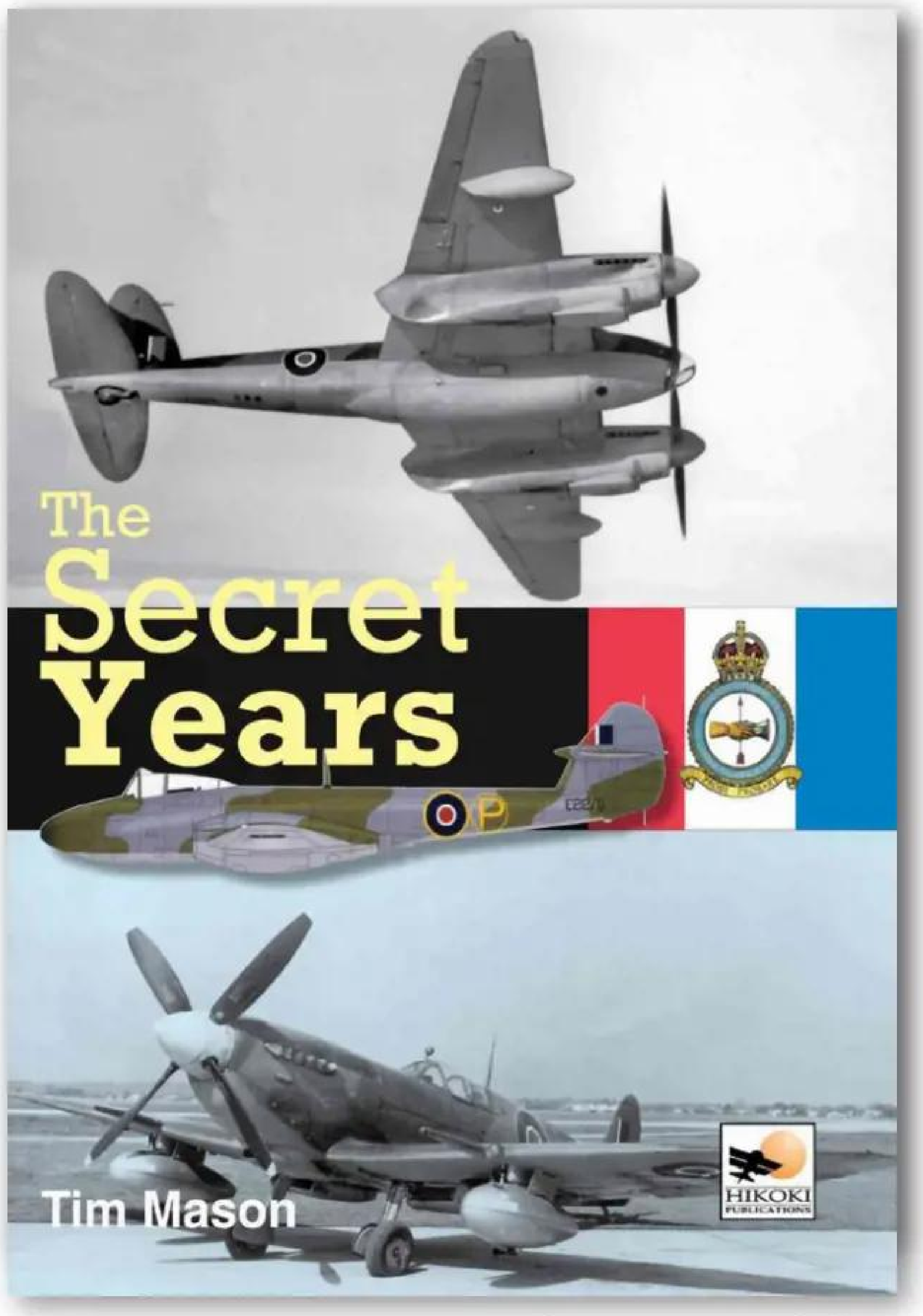
007: NORTH AMERICAN F-86 SABRE by Mark Linney. Part of the popular Owner's Worskhop Manual series, this heavily-illustrated 160-page hardbound book is an in-depth look at NAA's most famous jet fighter. PUB AT $28, NOW $20

Knights
OF THE BATTLE of BRITAIN
LUFTWAFFE AIRCREW AWARDED THE KNIGHTS CROSS IN THE SUMMER OF 1940
CHRIS GOSS

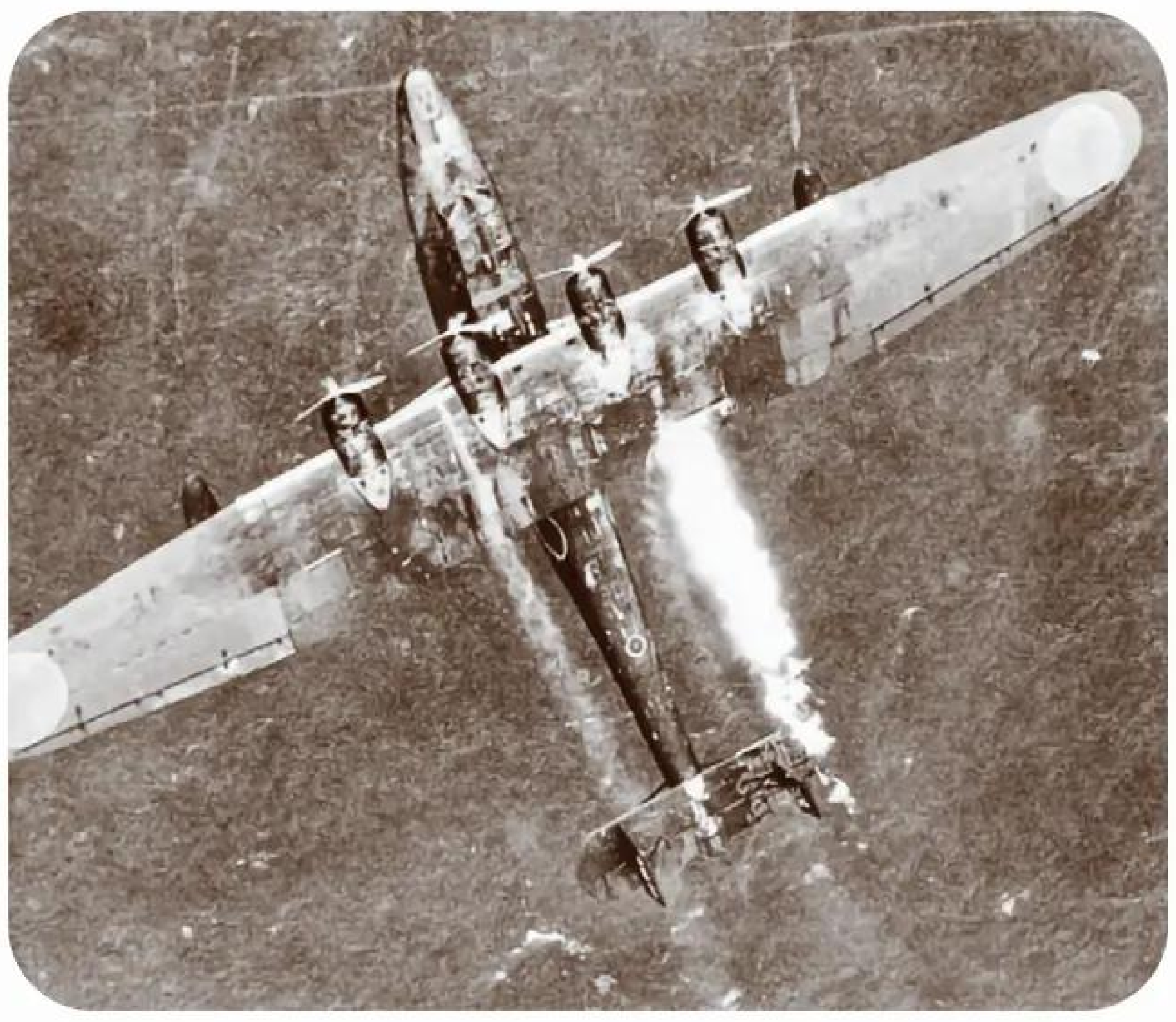
008: KNIGHTS OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN by Chris Goss. Hardbound, 240-page in-depth look at the *Luftwaffe* aircrew awarded the Knight's Cross during the summer of 1940. PUB AT $34.96, NOW $25


HAWKER'S EARLY JETS
DAWN OF THE HUNTER
CHRISTOPHER BUDGEN

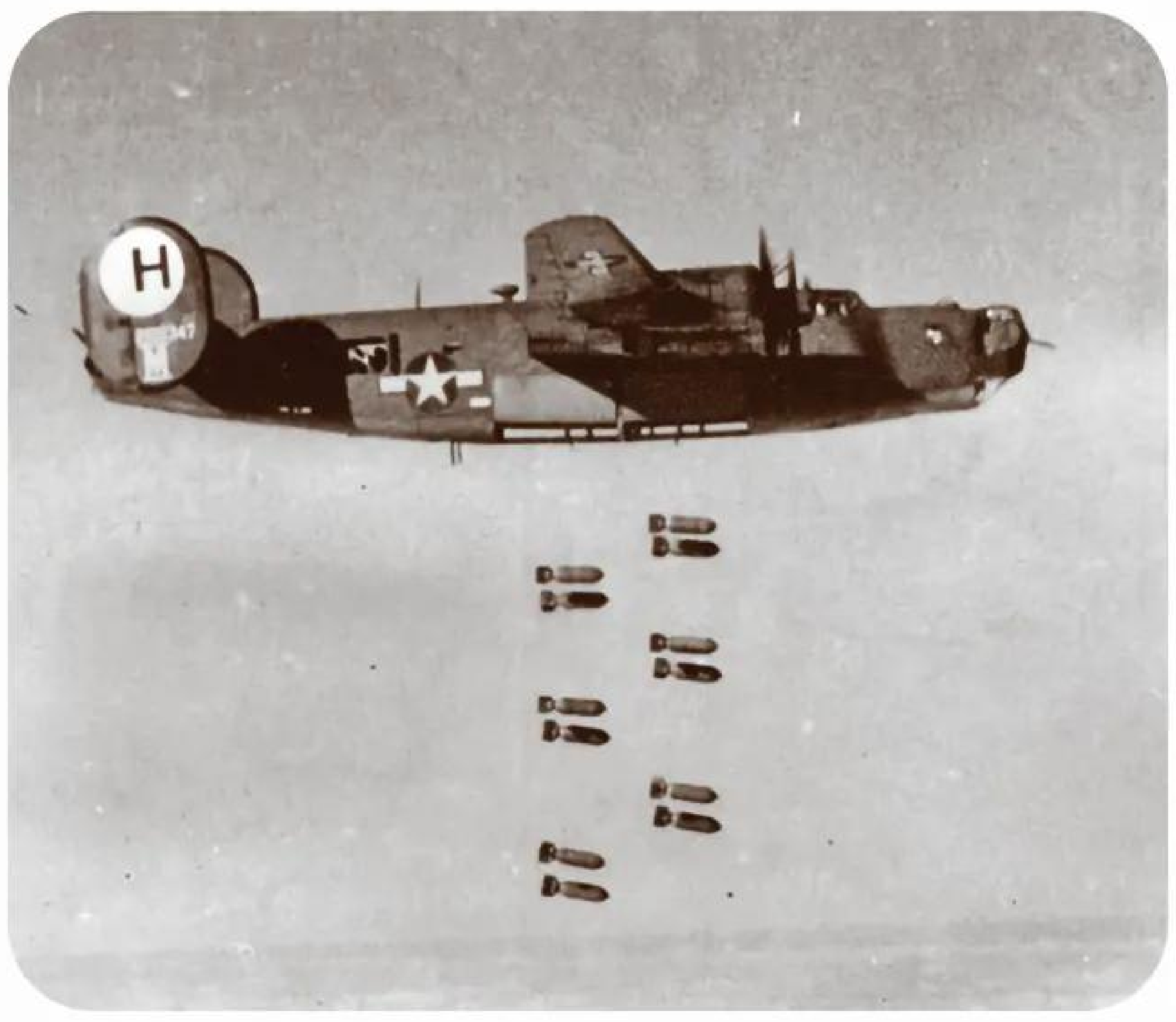
009: HAWKER'S EARLY JETS by Christopher Budgen. Hardbound 312 page heavily-illustrated volume looks into the many Hawker jet designs that would lead to the world-famous Hunter. PUB AT $49.95, NOW $35

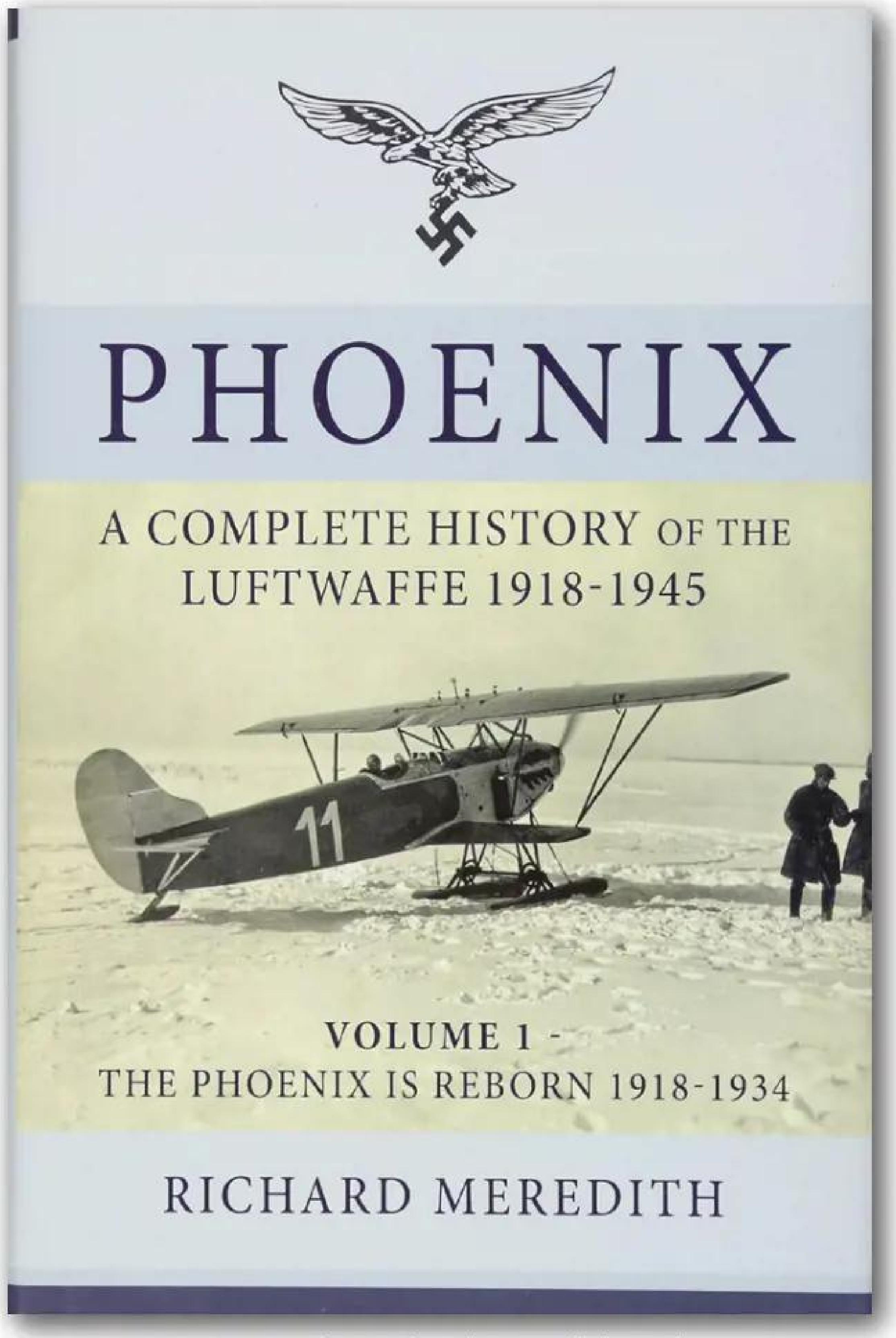

The Secret Years
Tim Mason
HIKOKI PUBLICATIONS

010: THE SECRET YEARS by Tim Mason. Flight testing at the RAF base of Boscombe Down from 1939 to 1945. Over 500 photos, hardbound, 368 pages. Inside look at all the combat aircraft test programs conducted at the base during WWII. PUB AT $56.95, NOW $40

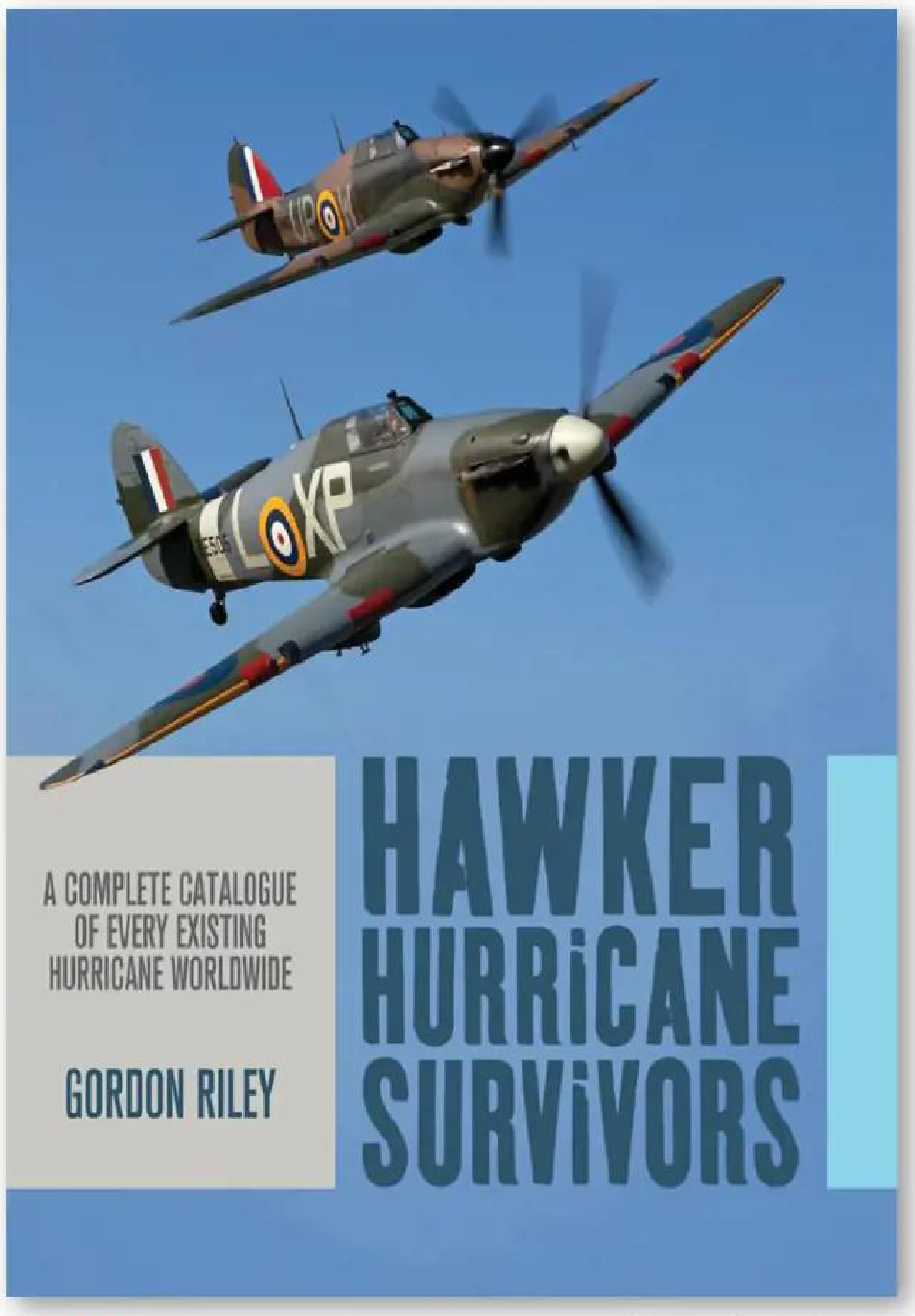


Snoot's Sniper

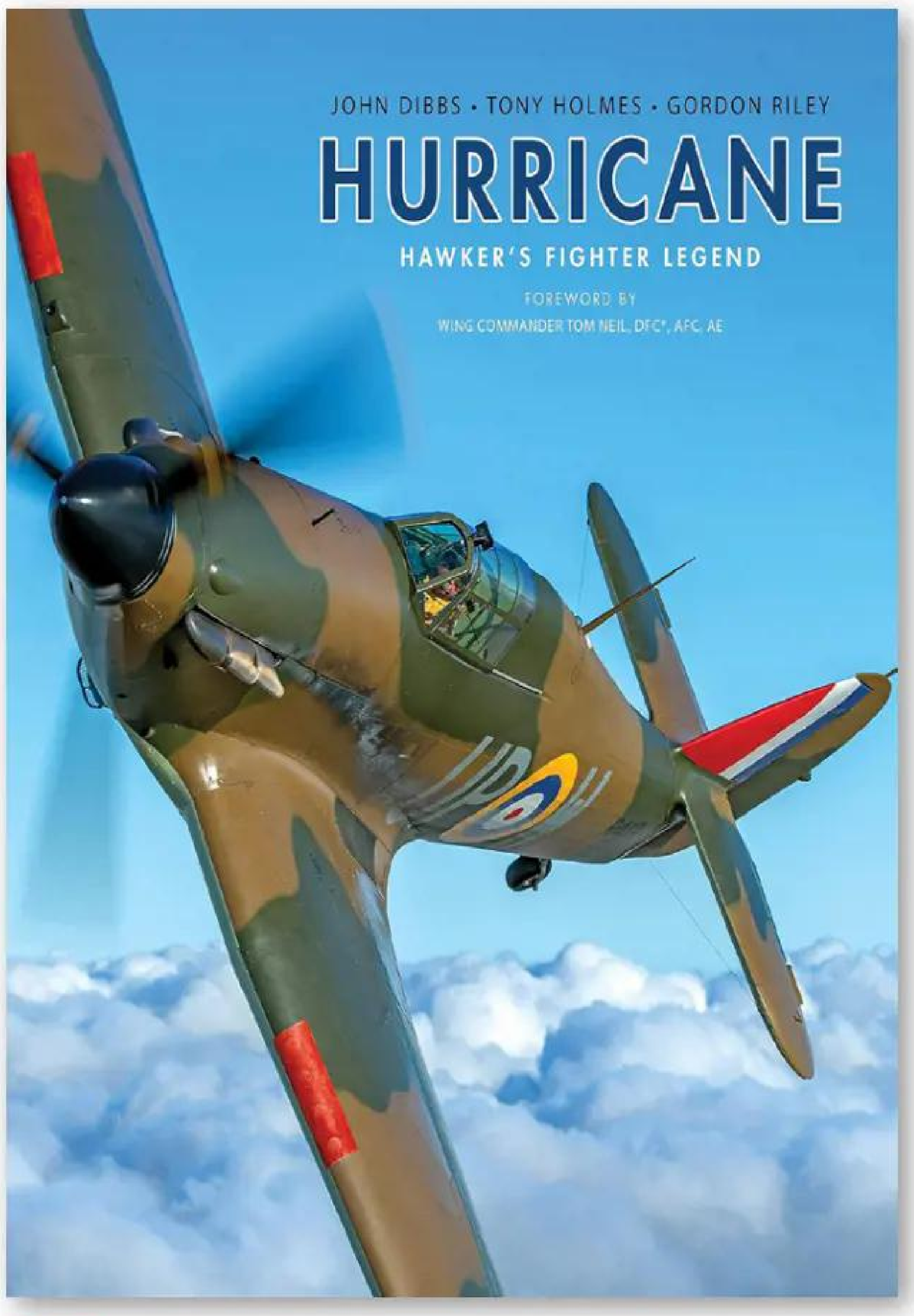



PHOENIX
A COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE LUFTWAFFE 1918-1945
VOLUME 1 - THE PHOENIX IS REBORN 1918-1934
RICHARD MEREDITH

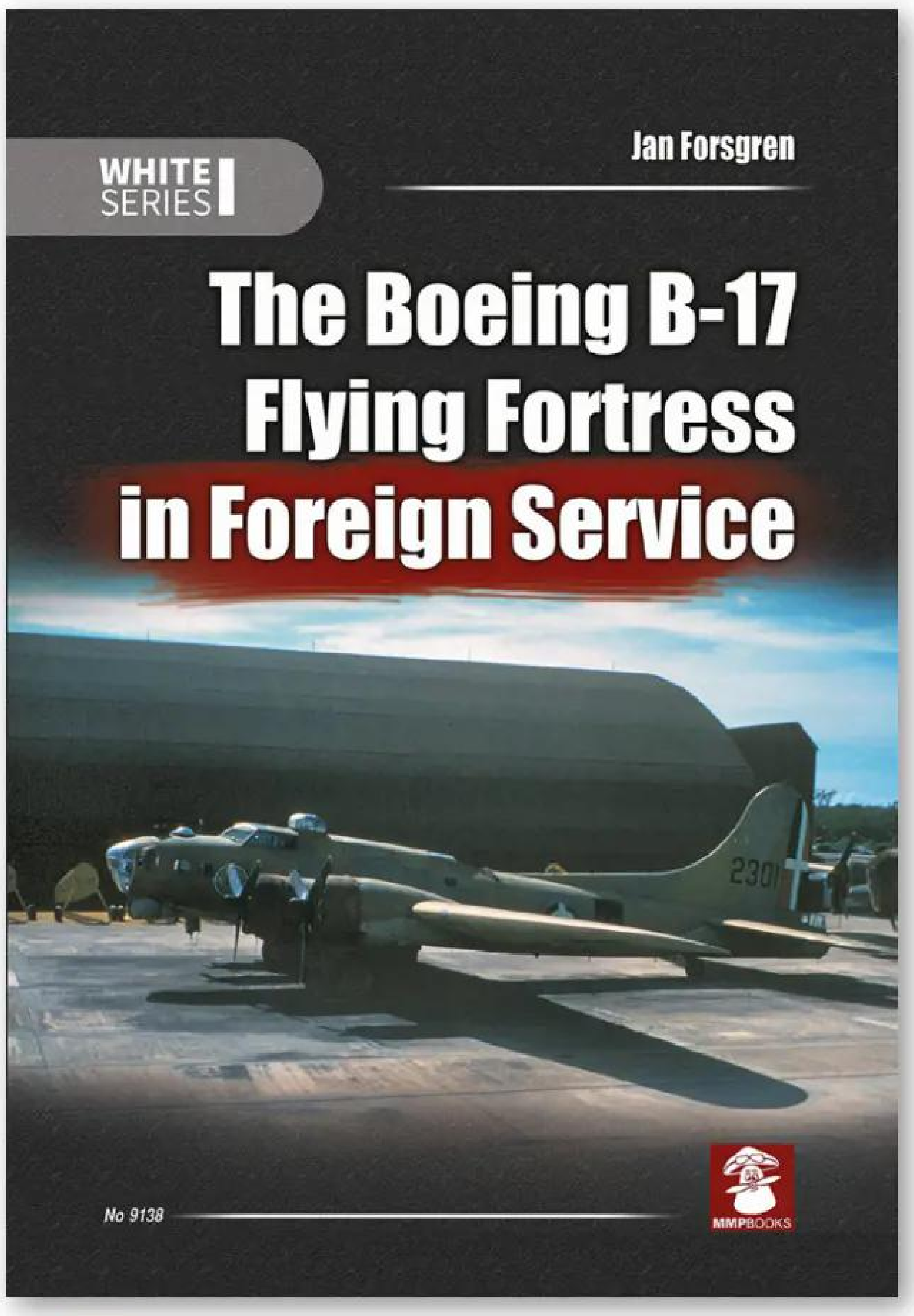
011: PHOENIX by Richard Meredith. Volume One in the complete history of the *Luftwaffe* from 1918-1945. This essential volume covers 1918-1934. Hardbound, 712 pages, heavily illustrated. PUB AT $79.95, NOW $40


A COMPLETE CATALOGUE OF EVERY EXISTING HURRICANE WORLDWIDE
GORDON RILEY
HAWKER HURRICANE SURVIVORS

012: HURRICANE SURVIVORS by Gordon Riley. 2025 marks the 85th anniversary of the pivotal Battle of Britain. The fighter that saw the most action was the Hawker Hurricane and this hardbound, very heavily-illustrated book is a guide to all the surviving examples. PUB AT $49.95, NOW $35


JOHN DIBBS · TONY HOLMES · GORDON RILEY
HURRICANE
HAWKER'S FIGHTER LEGEND
FOREWORD BY WING COMMANDER TOM NEIL, DFC*, AFC, AE

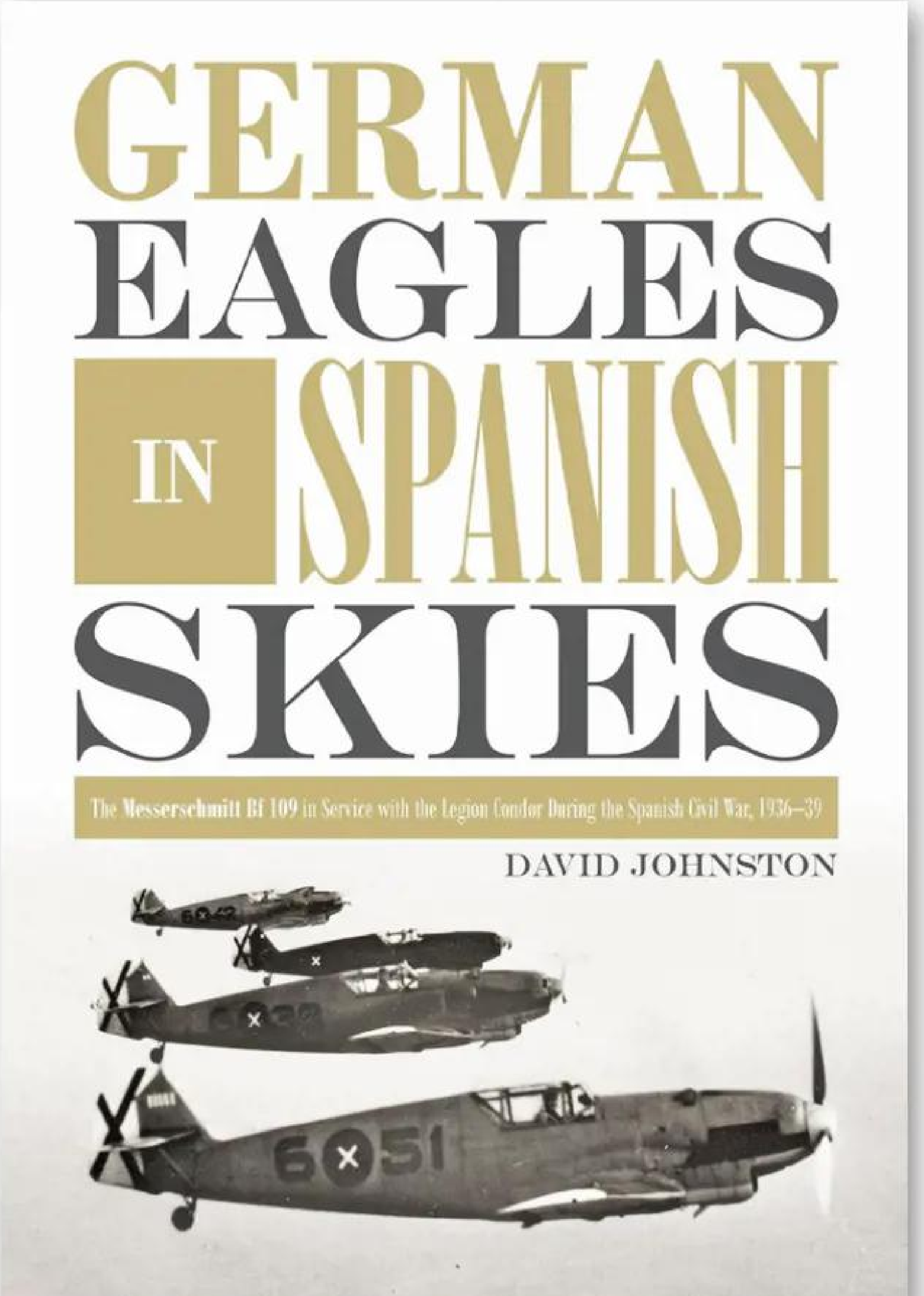
013: HURRICANE — HAWKER'S FIGHTER LEGEND by John Dibbs and Tony Homes is a lavish hardbound 256-page book that is heavily illustrated with photos of this famous aircraft. PUB AT $60, NOW $35


WHITE SERIES
Jan Forsgren
The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress in Foreign Service
No 9138
MMPBOOKS

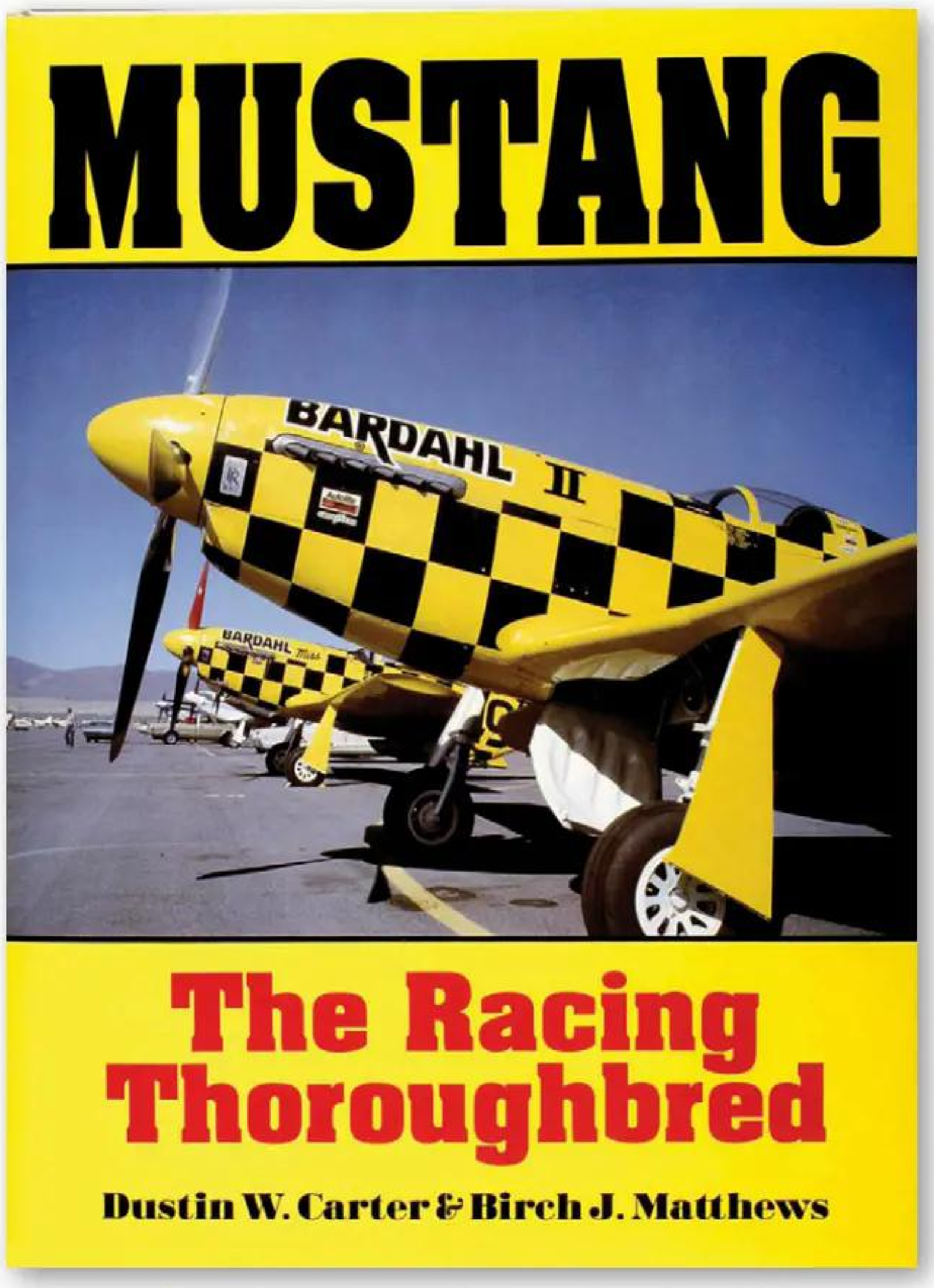
014: BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS IN FOREIGN SERVICE by Jan Forsgren and Arthur Juszczak. Softbound, heavily-illustrated, 160-page book looks at every foreign country that operated the B-17. Essential reference for all B-17 enthusiasts. PUB AT $32, NOW $26

No. 3
B-17G Flying Fortress in Israeli Air Force Service
1948-1957
Alex Yofe
White Crow Publications

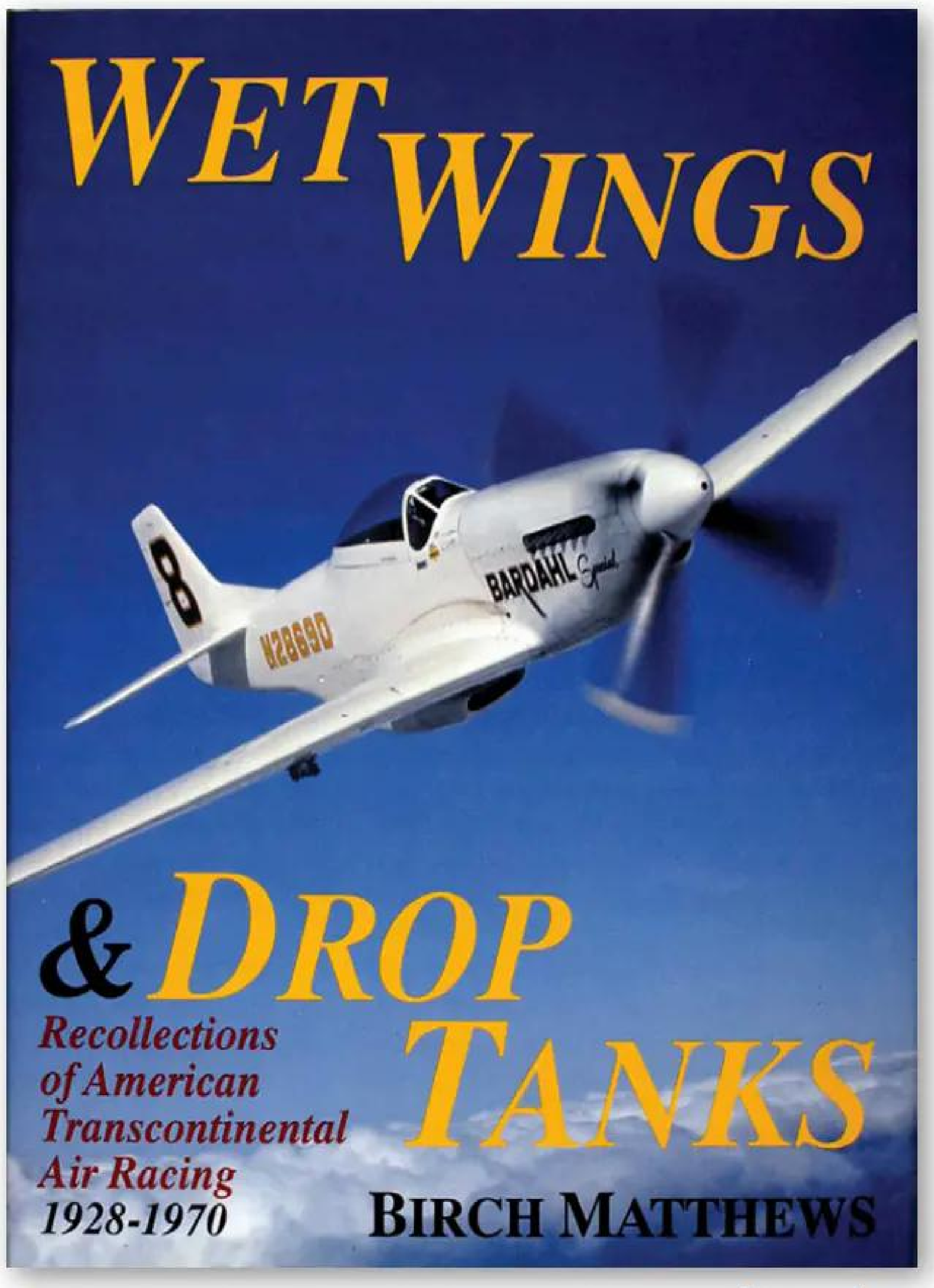
015: B-17G FLYING FORTRESS IN ISRAELI AIR FORCE SERVICE by Alex Yofe. Smuggled B-17s saw heavy combat against Arabs. Many rare photos, color profiles, softbound. PUB AT $35, NOW $25


GERMAN EAGLES IN SPANISH SKIES
The Messerschmitt Bf 109 in Service with the Legion Condor During the Spanish Civil War, 1936–39
DAVID JOHNSTON
6•51

016: GERMAN EAGLES IN SPANISH SKIES by David Johnston. Extensive reference on early Messerschmitt Bf 109s operated by the Legion Condor during the Spanish Civil War. Hardbound, 176 pages, heavily illustrated. PUB AT $45, NOW $30


MUSTANG
BARDAHL II
BARDAHL
The Racing Thoroughbred
Dustin W. Carter & Birch J. Matthews

017: MUSTANG, THE RACING THOROUGHBRED by Dustin W. Carter and Birch J. Matthews. The classic reference work on P-51 Mustangs modified for air racing. An essential reference for any aviation library. Hardbound and heavily illustrated. PUB AT $40, NOW $356


WET WINGS
& DROP TANKS
Recollections of American Transcontinental Air Racing 1928-1970
BIRCH MATTHEWS
8
BARDAHL Special
N2869D

018: WET WINGS & DROP TANKS by Birch J. Matthews. Hardbound and heavily illustrated. This companion volume to *Mustang, The Racing Thoroughbred* details the history of American transcontinental air racing from 1928 to 1970. Once again, an essential reference work. PUB AT $45, NOW $40

QUANTITY	TITLE NAME	PRICE EACH	TOTAL DUE
	001 DEAD RECKONING	$21	
	002 THE PETLYAKOV PE-2	$32	
	003 UNSHACKLED SPIRIT	$22	
	004 OPERATION KE	$32	
	005 THE NIGHT HUNTER'S PREY	$22	
	006 LUFTWAFFE VICTORY MARKINGS	$25	
	007 NORTH AMERICAN F-86 SABRE	$20	
	008 KNIGHTS OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN	$25	
	009 HAWKER'S EARLY JETS	$35	
	010 THE SECRET YEARS	$40	
	011 PHOENIX	$40	
	012 HURRICANE SURVIVORS	$35	
	013 HURRICANE – HAWKER'S FIGHTER LEGEND	$35	
	014 BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS IN FOREIGN SERVICE	$26	
	015 B-17G FLYING FORTRESS IN ISRAELI AIR FORCE SERVICE	$25	
	016 GERMAN EAGLES	$30	
	017 MUSTANG, THE RACING THOROUGHBRED	$36	
	018 WET WINGS & DROP TANKS	$40	
	ORDER OVER $100 AND TAKE OFF AN ADDITIONAL 10%!		

(Domestic Postage is included in the purchase price.
Canadian and foreign orders please call
1-818-700-6868 or email *ed@challengeweb.com*
for additional postage cost by title.)

DEDUCT DISCOUNT ____
MERCHANDISE TOTAL ____
CA Residents add 9% Sales Tax ____
TOTAL DUE (U.S. Funds Only) ____

CALL 818-700-6868 FOR IMMEDIATE SERVICE!

Name ______________________________
Address ______________________________
City ____________________ State________ Zip + 4 ________
Telephone Number (in the event we need to contact you): ______________________________
E-mail address: ______________________________

EXTRA DISCOUNT!

BUY OVER $100 AND TAKE OFF AN ***ADDITIONAL 10%***

Challenge AVIATION BOOK CLUB

Payment Enclosed (Orders must be prepaid in U.S. funds)

○ Check ○ Money Order ○ Credit Card

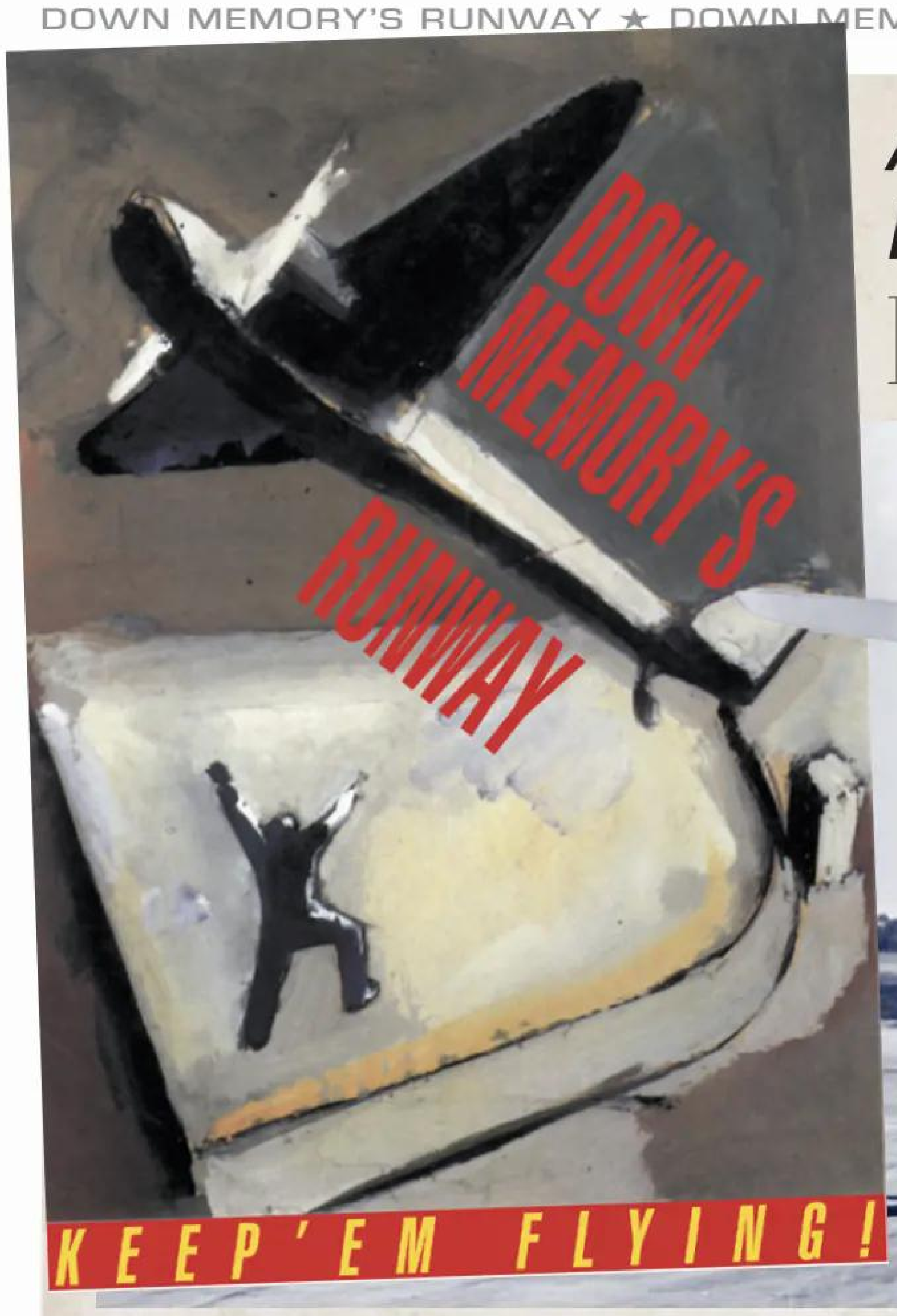
Card # ______________________________
CVV # ______________________________
Expiration Date ______________________________
Signature______________________________

SEND TO:

CHALLENGE ABC
9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd.
#368
Chatsworth, CA 91311

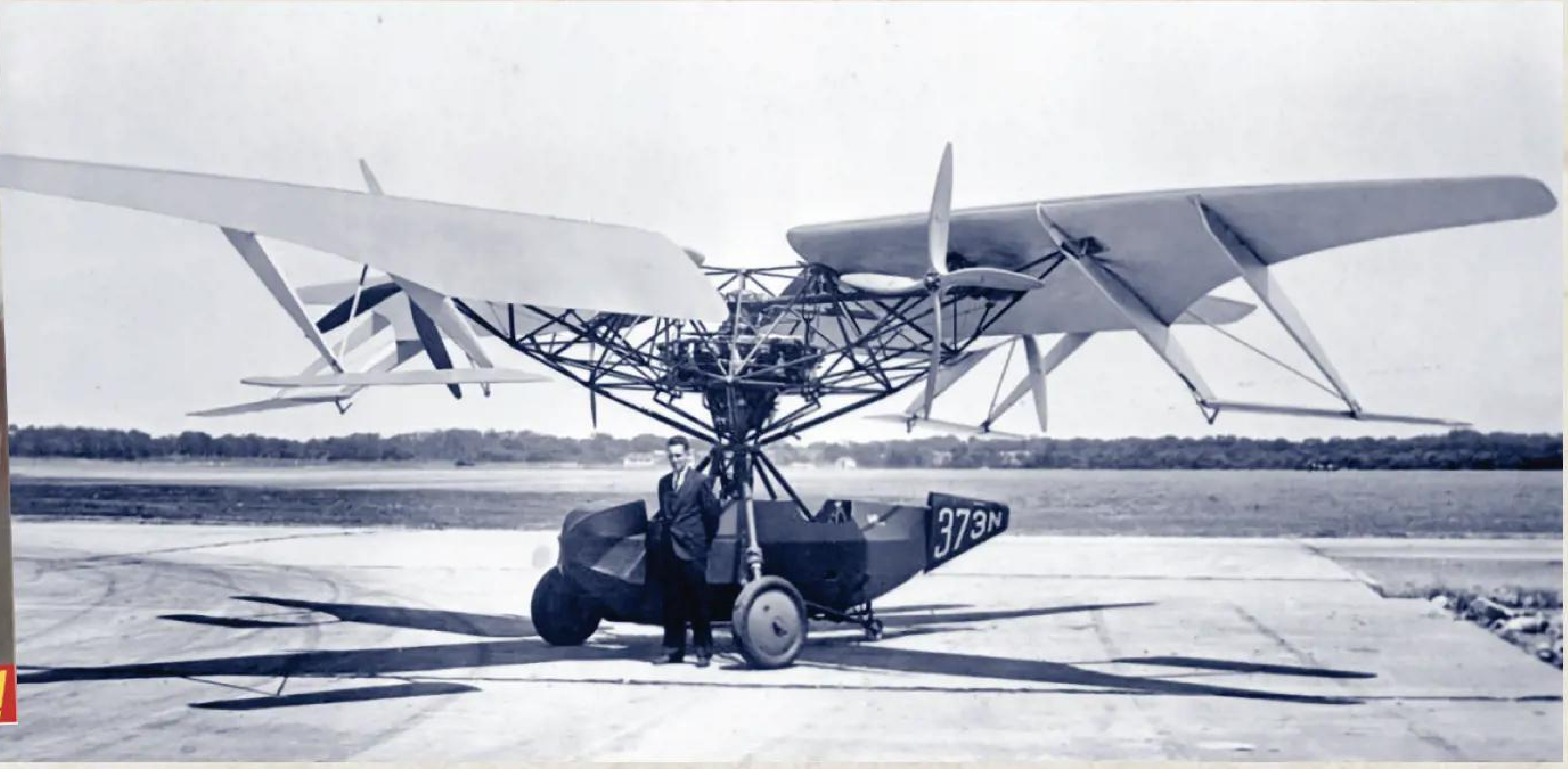
OR, ORDER AT:

1-818-700-6868

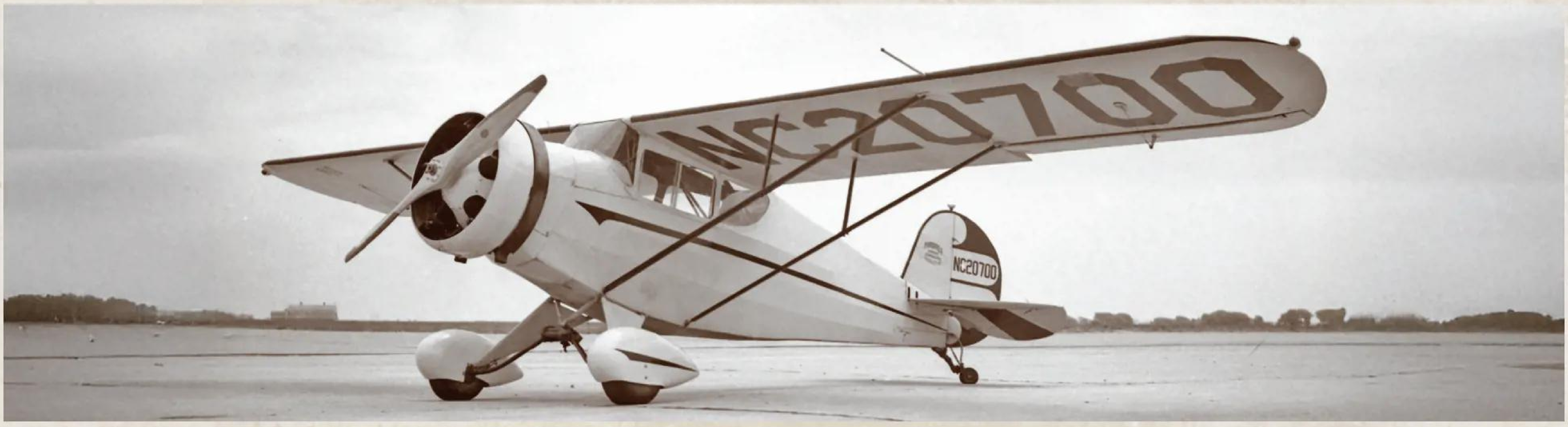


AMERICAN AIRCRAFT DESIGNS FROM AVIATION'S GLORIOUS PAST

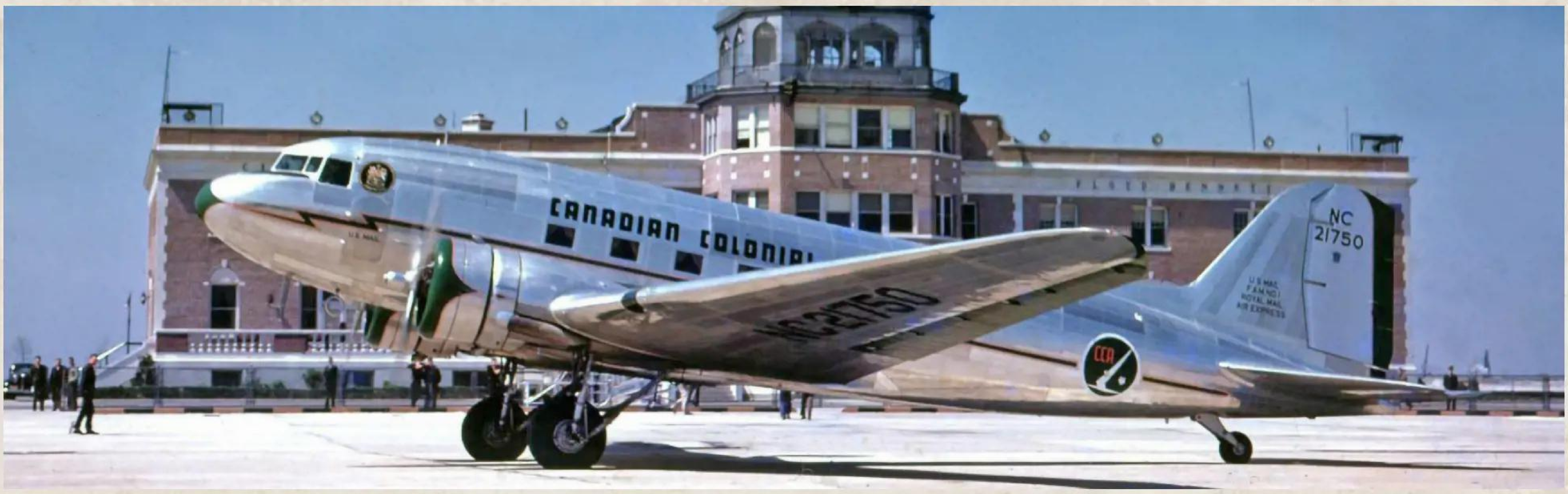
BY NORM TAYLOR



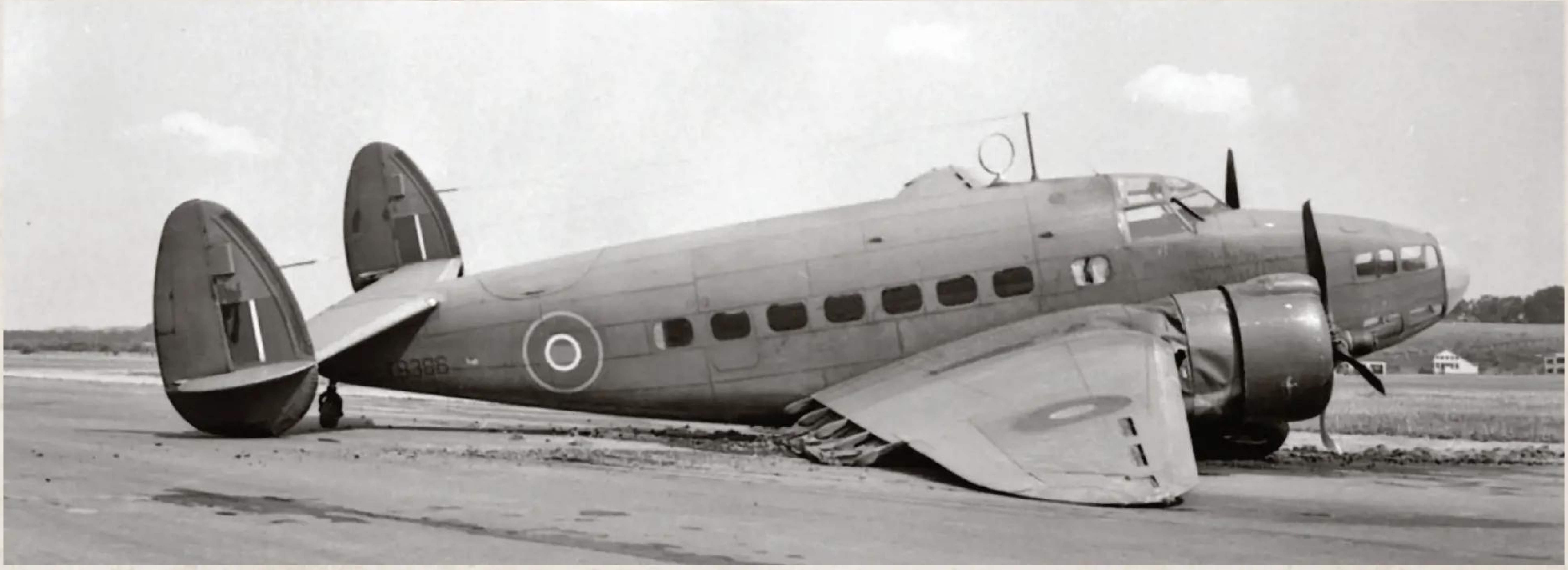
Did they really think it would work? This strange amalgam of bits and pieces was the Curtiss-Bleecker SX5-1 that carried the registration 373N. The design was an attempt to build a helicopter/vertical lift machine but, as can be seen, the profusion of propellers and moving parts made the creation problematical at best. Maitland Bleecker was a young engineer at NACA and beginning in 1926 he and Curtiss began collaborating on the craft. Power came from a centrally-mounted Pratt & Whitney Wasp that drove very large rotors, each of which had its own propeller for thrust and a trailing control surface called a "stabovator" that could change pitch of the rotor. Yaw was controlled with a "spin vane" that used downwash from the rotor to pivot the craft with foot pedals. It is unclear if this contraption actually flew but it may have "hopped" several times at Roosevelt Field before the engine crankshaft broke. The design experienced extreme vibration (no surprise) and by 1933 work was abandoned.



This Rudy Arnold photo taken at Floyd Bennett Field displays the trim lines of the Porterfield 35/70 Flyabout. The tandem two-seater was seen on 3 June 1938 and was a relatively successful entry in the two-seat light aircraft market. The design could mount a number of options and NC20700 was fitted with a Warner Scarab radial.

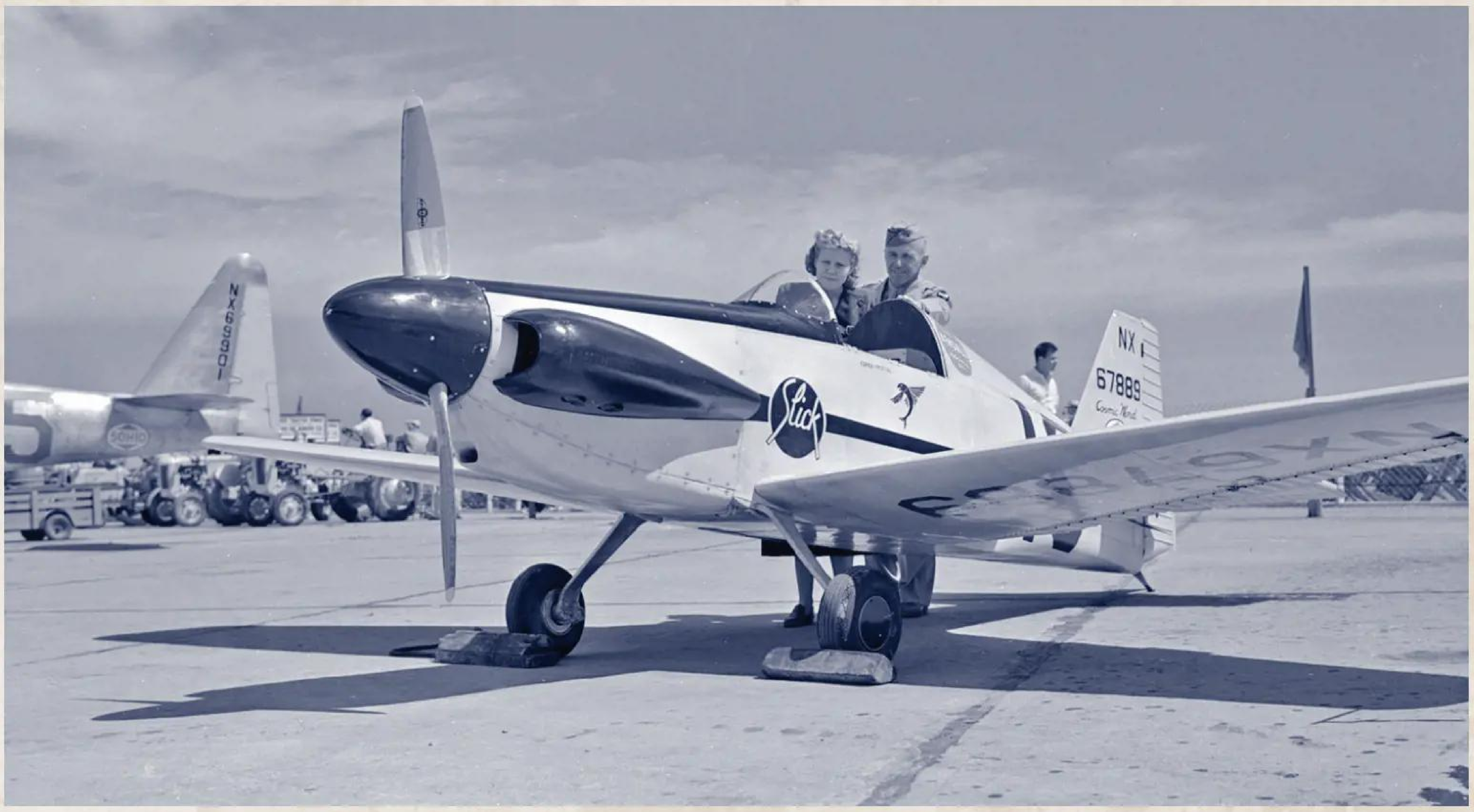


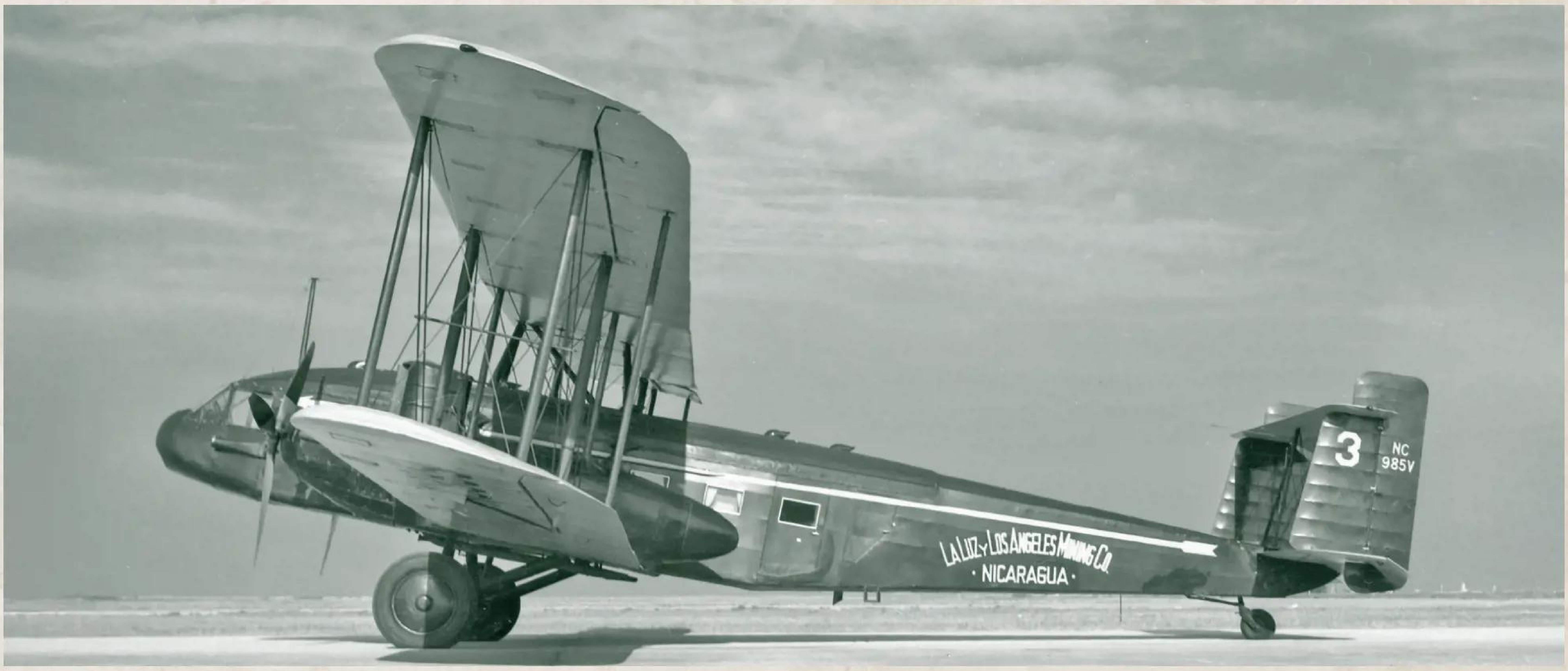
Another Rudy Arnold photo taken during 1940 at Floyd Bennett Field is of a gleaming DC-3-270 in the markings of Canadian Colonial Airways but carrying the American registration of NC21750. Typical of airline operators of the time, markings were pretty minimal. WWII was ravaging the world and the plane was transferred to PAA for use on its African system. Records indicate the transport was at Khartoum, Sudan, on 10 March 1942 when it was destroyed by fire. A few days after that event, it was assigned the USAAF serial of 42-38257 and designation of C-49H, a case of the paperwork catching up after the plane was written off.



With its right gear folded, Lockheed Model 14 Super Electra RCAF T9386 presents a sorry sight on 2 June 1944 at Rockcliffe in Ontario, Canada. The RAF would get 428 Hudson Mk. IIIs and T9386 was the first. Three of these aircraft were passed on to the RCAF but T9386 was not one of them and its history is a bit unclear. It may have been attached to Ferry Command as a hack or as a trainer.

With the end of WWII, the revitalized Cleveland National Air Races took off with a roar. The new Goodyear class featured small racers battling around the pylons and one of the most attractive was the LeVier Cosmic Wind series. This Hans Groenhoff photo taken on 1 September 1947 shows Cosmic Wind c/n 102 NX67889 (to N21C) wearing the markings of sponsor Slick Airways. This aircraft had a long life and in 1992 it was part of a collection of airframes, parts, and jigs sold in Britain. Reassembled, it became G-NZIC and is apparently still airworthy.

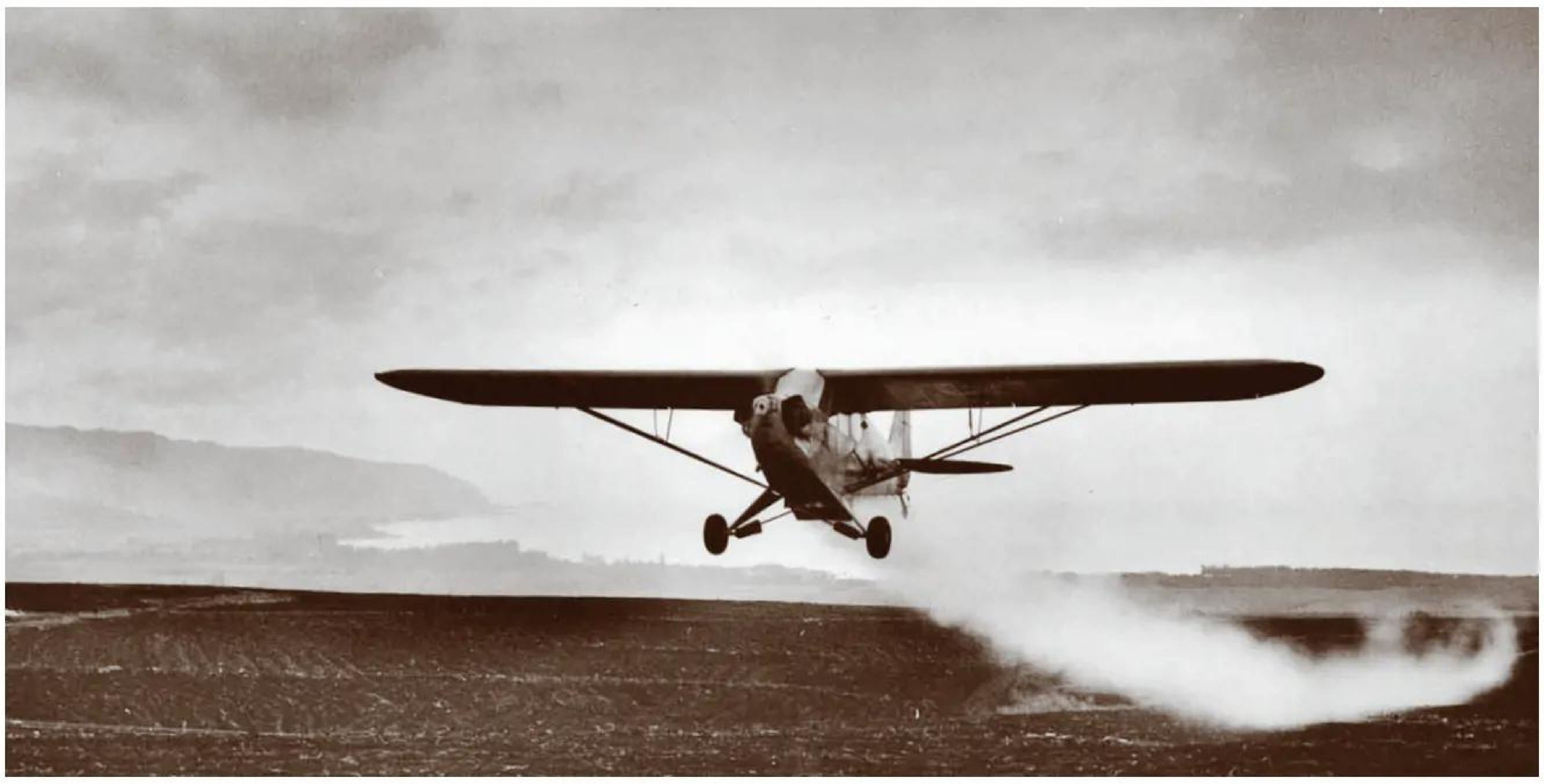


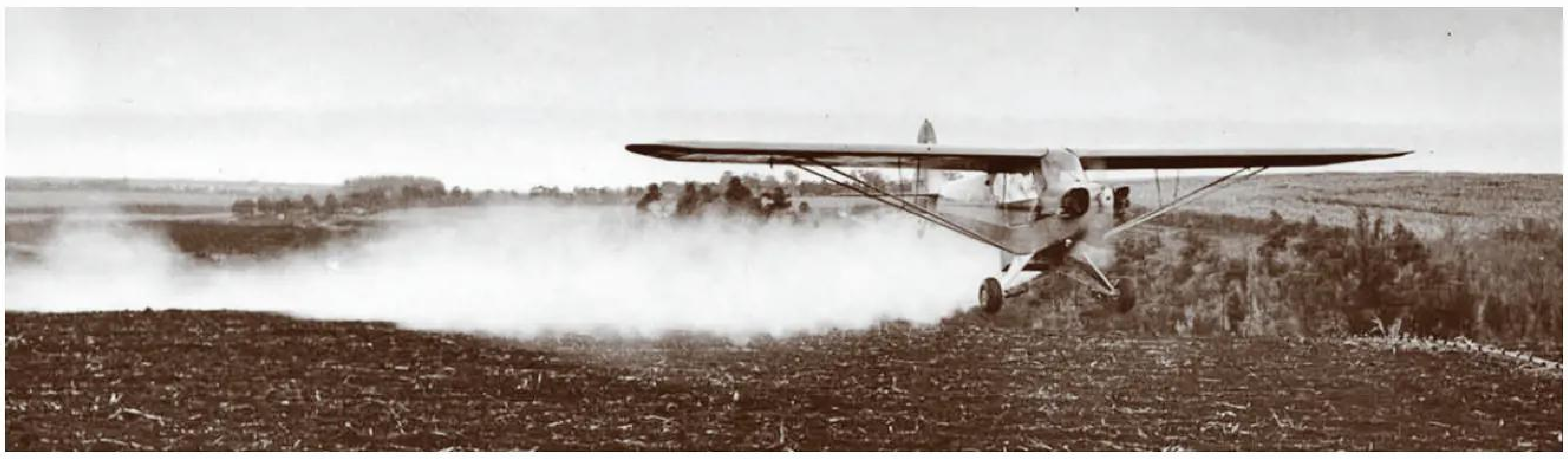


This Rudy Arnold image was taken at Floyd Bennett Field on 15 November 1937 and depicts Curtiss Model 53 Condor NC985V. The large biplane wears the markings of La Luz y Los Angeles Mining Company, which was based in Nicaragua. The plane may have ended its days in that country. AC

PIPER CUB AG PLANES

I enjoyed the article on "Flight of Glimpy" in the March issue along with the correspondence that followed and the mentions of the J-3 used as an ag plane. At first, it seems that the Cub would not make a good ag bird but it actually did, especially with upgraded engines and cutdown airframes. I recall seeing quite a few of them around the country back in the 1960s/1970s but I know use of the type for ag work actually went back to the late 1930s when the Cubs were new and I am enclosing a few photos of Cubs at work in Hawaii during that time period but I do not know the operator. The entire history of ag aviation has been very poorly recorded and I would like to thank *Air Classics* for the occasional article on the subject along with the many photos of surplus military aircraft modified as sprayers and dusters. It is a shame that no one has taken the time to document this part of aviation history that has been so important to the American life style. Without ag aircraft, our farming industry could not have developed into the giant that it is today.


Mr. Reed's photo of a J-3 being used as a crop duster in Honolulu during the late 1930s.

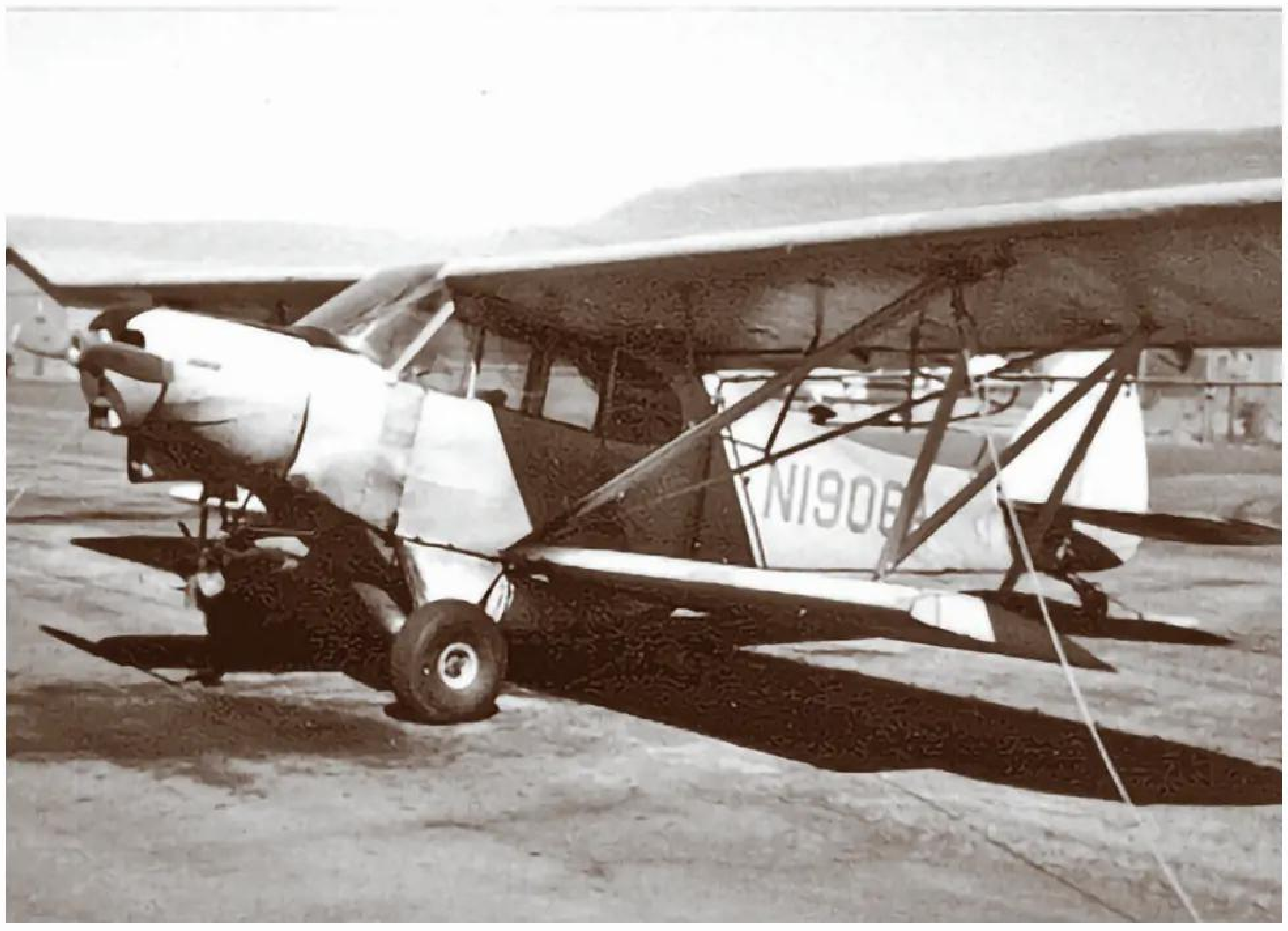

Another view of a Hawaiian J-3 at work.

I have the hulks of three Cubs in the back of my hangar and two of them were built up as hard-working sprayers and were crashed during their careers. Having restored several J-3s over the years, I am not so sure what I will do with these aircraft but I might make one out of the best parts of the three. Along with the Hawaiian shots, I have put in a couple more ag Cubs. It would be nice if readers could send in more photos so we could get a type history going.

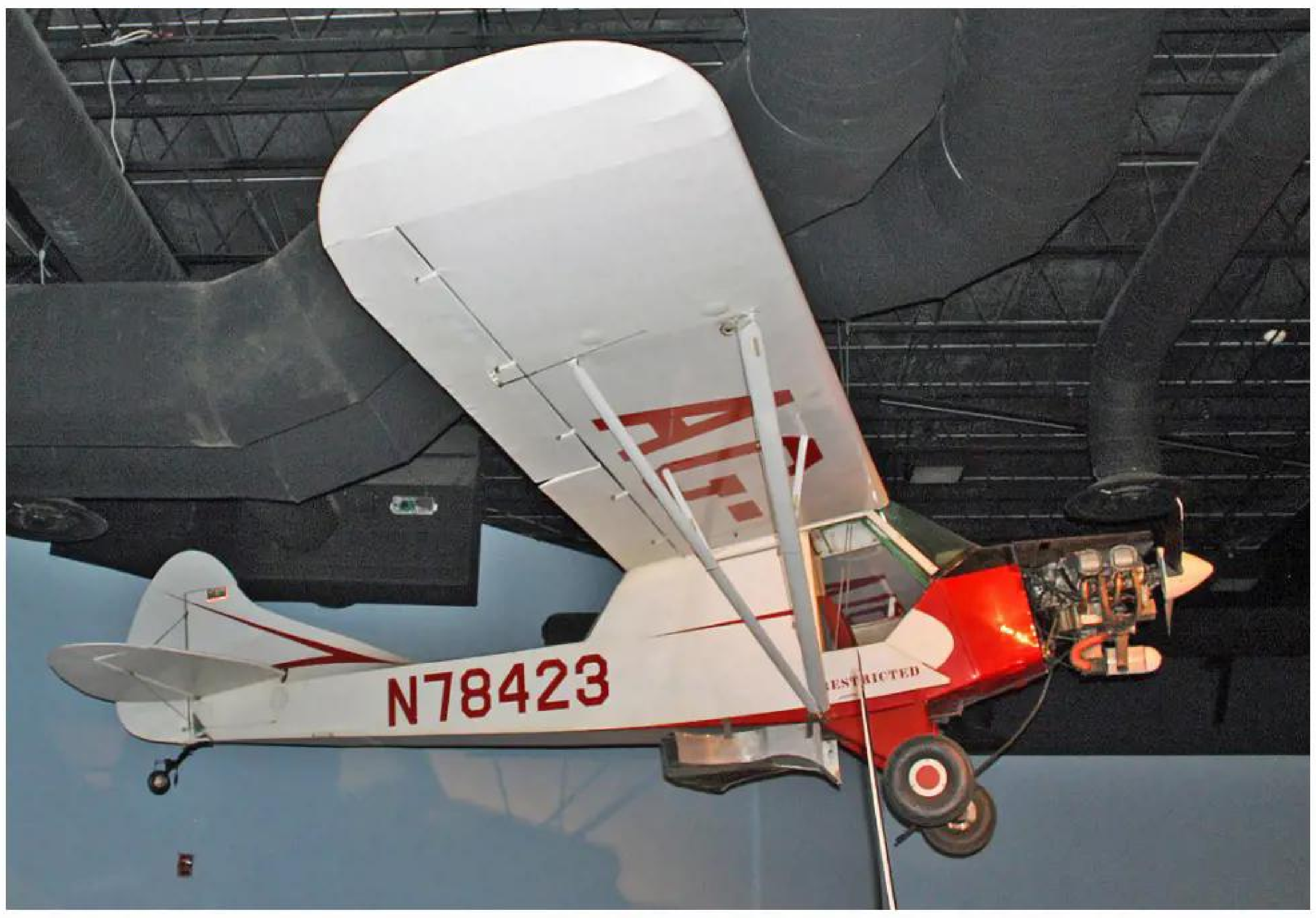
Hank Reed
Ames, IA

MARTIN MARS

Thank you for the article on the last Martin Mars along with the history of this remarkable flying boat. I never saw the Mars operate from San Francisco Bay with the US Navy but I certainly was on hand to watch the majestic last takeoff from the Bay. Hearing those four big radials and watching the long takeoff run with the Mars finally coming up on the step and then gracefully lifting into the air is something I will never forget. I watched as the aircraft began its left turn for the Golden Gate and that is where I saw the Baron join up on the Mars for your photo mission. There were several other aircraft and helicopters in the area and I wondered if you were in communication



As time went on, Cub airframe modifications became more drastic as can be seen in this snapshot dated 1967 showing Cub duster N77707.



Fortunately, at least one Cub ag aircraft has been preserved. Highly-modified J-3C N78423 is in the National Agricultural Aviation Museum in Jackson, Mississippi.

PHILIPPINE MARS
NAVAL AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE

A final shot of the Mars as it departs San Francisco airspace.

with them? Thanks again and I plan on visiting the Mars when it is put on display and the Pima Air & Space Museum.

Wade Walker
San Francisco, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE. Yes, that final liftoff from San Francisco Bay was really something to see. In the Baron, Greg Colyer, Joe Scheil, and myself were kept pretty busy — Greg flying formation while I took photos and Joe kept a lookout for traffic. The aircraft on the outbound leg had been briefed but for the inbound leg on the previous day, the situation was a bit different. We had gone through a lengthy and detailed briefing with the Mars crew for, as you can imagine, entering San Francisco airspace is a bit complex since the area is very congested with aircraft as airliners and other planes come and go from San Francisco International and Oakland. Being the professional that he is, Greg had also briefed with the controllers and told them exactly what we would be doing — accompanying the Mars across the Golden Gate and then staying in formation with the flying boat through Class B airspace as the Mars circled the area to find a perfect touchdown location. We then planned to orbit the aircraft a couple times as it taxied to where it would be anchored. At that point, we departed the area and headed back for landing. However, we must note that on the inbound leg no less than seven other aircraft began to intrude on our formation. All were, of course, unauthorized and none were in touch with either the Mars or the Baron or the controllers in the Bay area. We felt one aircraft in particular was acting in an unsafe manner and this was an orange-painted Marchetti SF.260. The aircraft had no communication with anyone and was attempting to get into formation to allow his amateur photographer passenger a chance to grab some snapshots. Obviously, this is not only unprofessional but extremely unsafe. The Mars kept broadcasting over an open frequency for the SF.260 to depart the area but it didn't. We were able to get the aircraft's registration and the name of the pilot and pass that information on to the FAA. Fortunately, the outbound leg the next day was accomplished in a much saner manner.

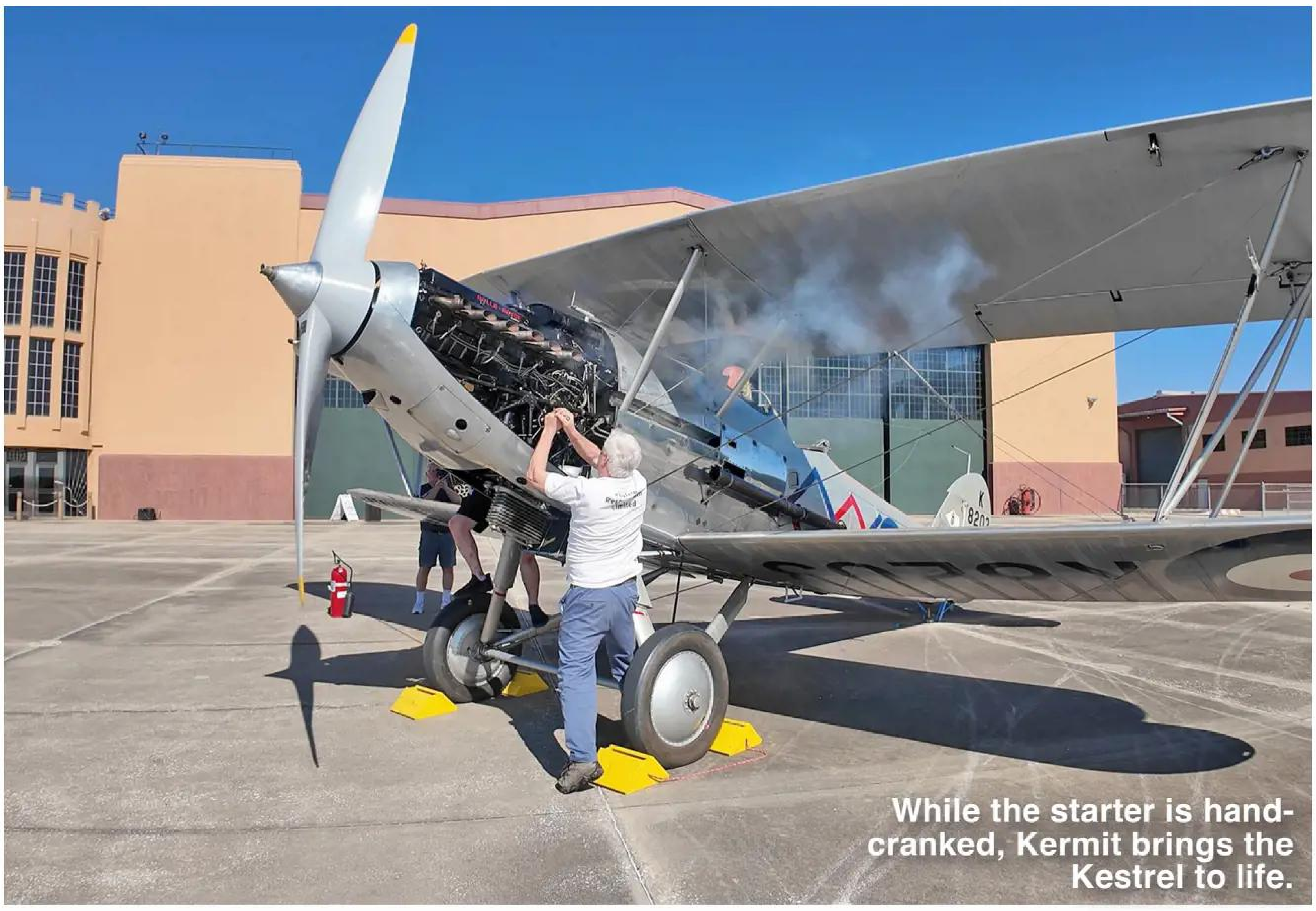
DEMON COMES TO LIFE

As this issue goes to the printer on 17 April, we received some photos from Kermit Weeks of the Kestrel engine on his Hawker Demon coming to life for the first time since the plane arrived in Florida. We wanted to get a photograph in of Kermit running the Demon — a really significant event when it comes to Golden Age military biplanes.

"FILL 'ER UP!"

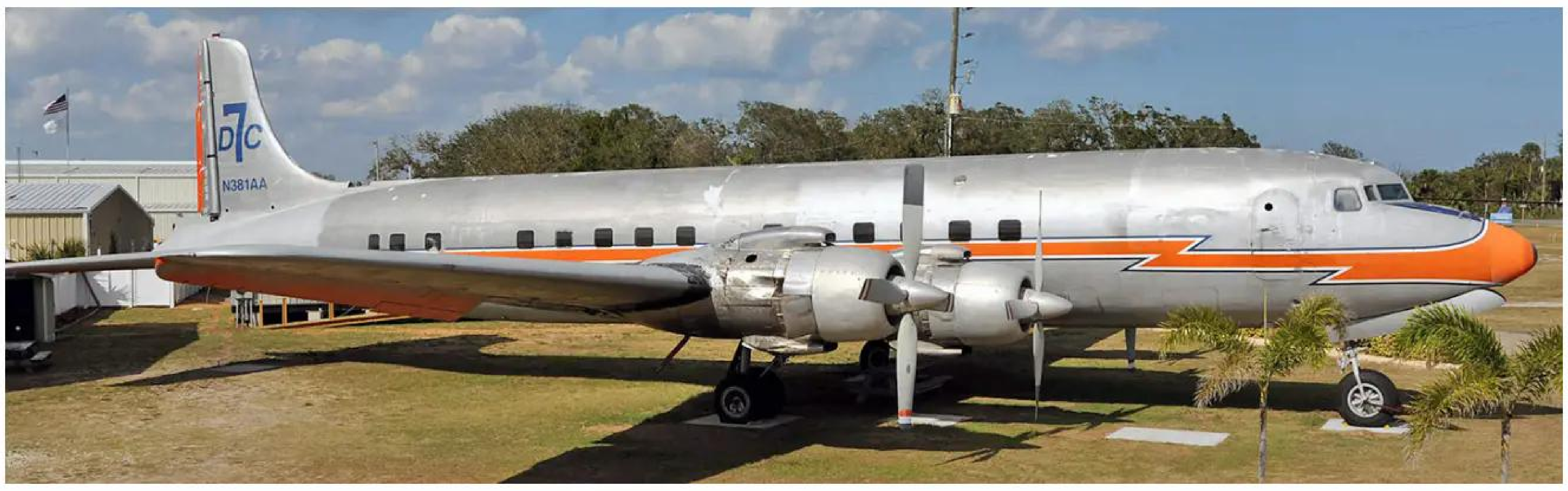
I have enjoyed the first two segments of this series. As you know, an attempt to create an aircraft restaurant at New Smyrna Beach, Florida, has been an on-again, off-again proposition. You printed some of my information in a previous *Air Classics* but I wanted to offer an update. The aircraft, N381AA, was disassembled and moved to the airfield as part of a reality show. It was reassembled and work was started on the interior when reality reared its ugly head. Although there was a ground-level restaurant planned, the town (or county) insisted on an elevator to allow handicapped access to the airliner and they also were going to impose some very hefty fees for hooking up to the sewer system, etc. That made the project financially unfeasible and the owner walked away from it.

The owner also operates the Epic

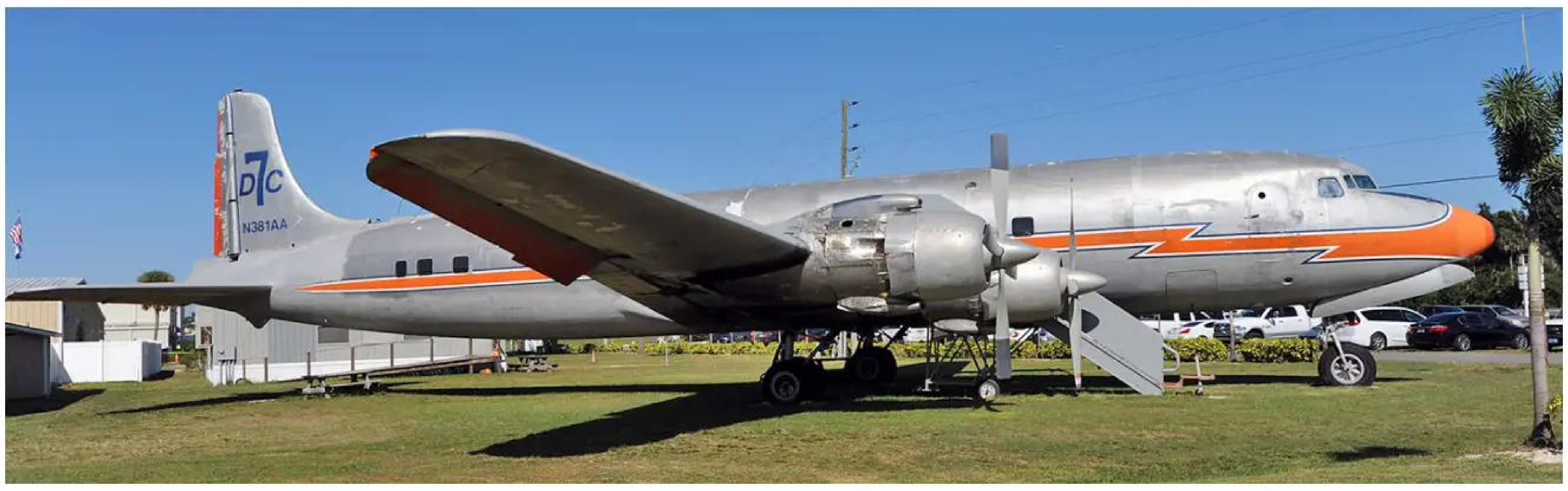


While the starter is hand-cranked, Kermit brings the Kestrel to life.

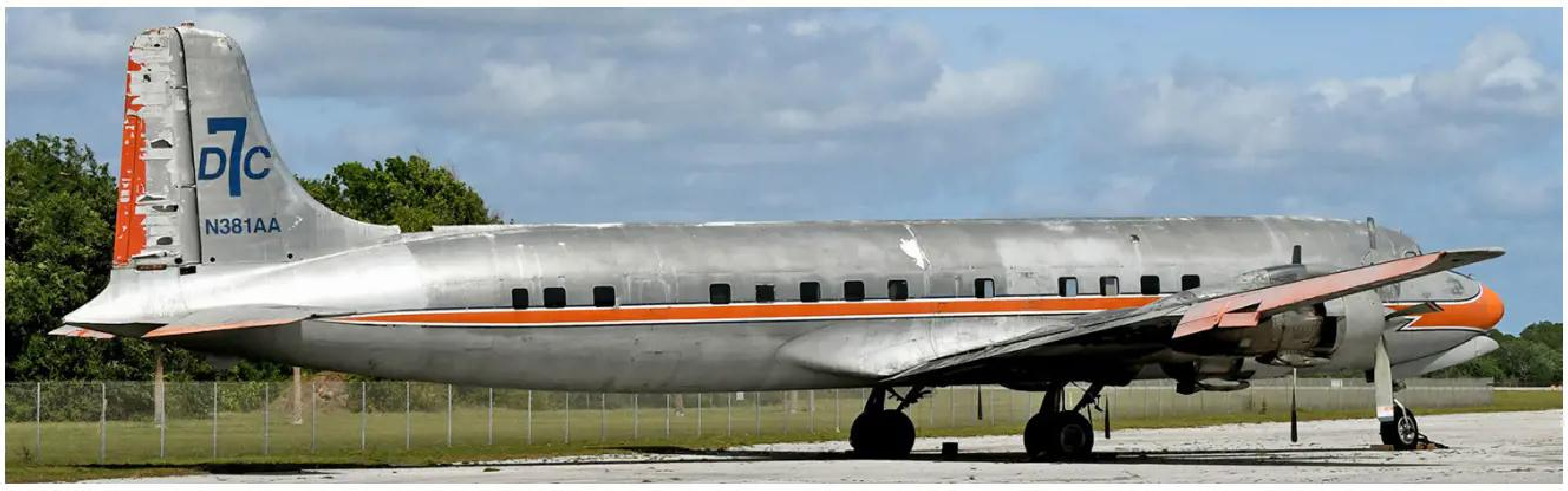
Aviation Models
Desktop, Diecast, Balsa Kits, & Custom Models
www.aviation-models.com
P.O. Box 542
Sandisfield, MA 01255
(800) 591-4823
Check out our sister website.
The Aviation History Online Museum
www.aviation-history.com



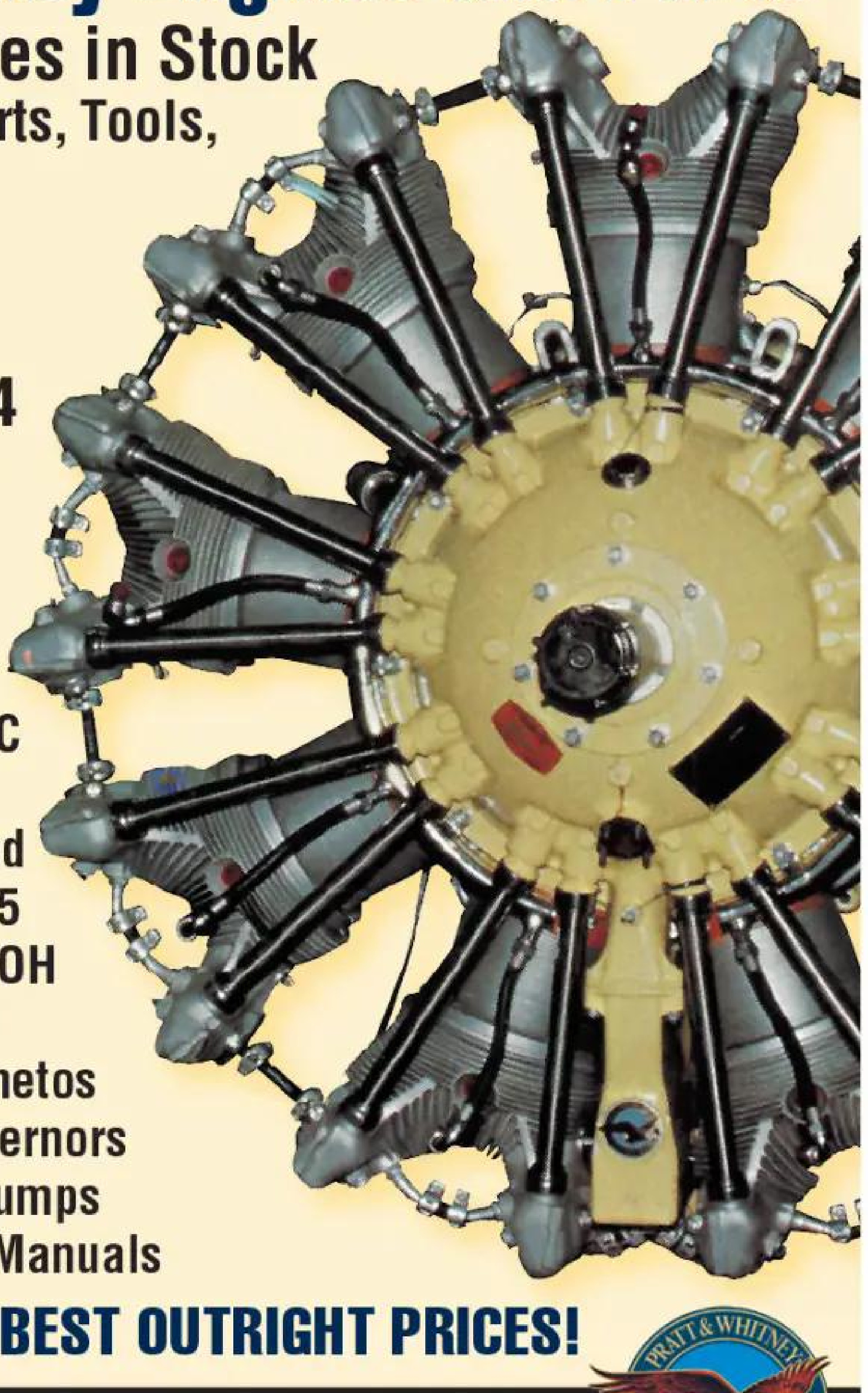
DC-7 N381AA wearing partial American Airlines markings and photographed on 3 February 2017. Note the feathered number four prop. (RMP)



The airliner during one of its moves around the field on 18 November 2017. (RMP)



The classic Douglas on 23 March 2023. (RMP)

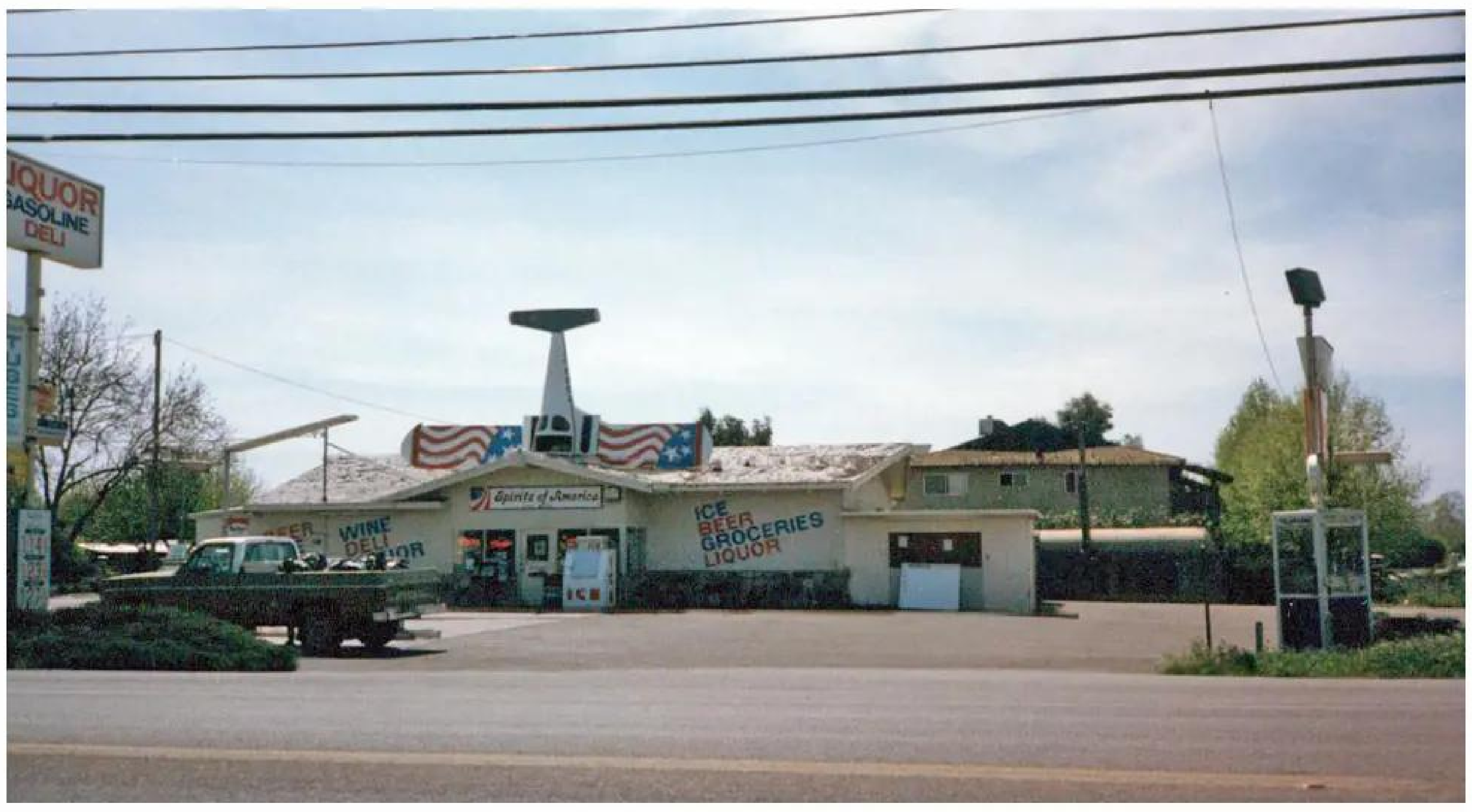


Pratt & Whitney Engines and Parts
Zero-Time Engines in Stock
Complete Stock of Parts, Tools, and Accessories
R-985 • R-1340
R-1340 Geared
R-1830-92 and -94
R-2000 • R-2800
• Complete OHC R-985 and R-1340 Cylinder Assemblies — All with New Pistons • Also, OHC and New R-1830s and R-2800 CBs • Engine and Carb Gasket Kits • R-985 No-Blow Gaskets • Top OH Tool Kits • Spark Plugs
• Engine Mounts • Magnetos
• Carbs • Starters • Governors
• Fuel Pumps • Boost Pumps
• Maintenance and OH Manuals
CALL FOR BEST OUTRIGHT PRICES!
Sun Air Parts
Ph: 661-257-7708 • Fx: 661-257-7710
26007 Huntington Lane, Valencia, CA 91355
Info@SunAirParts.com
SE HABLA ESPAÑOL

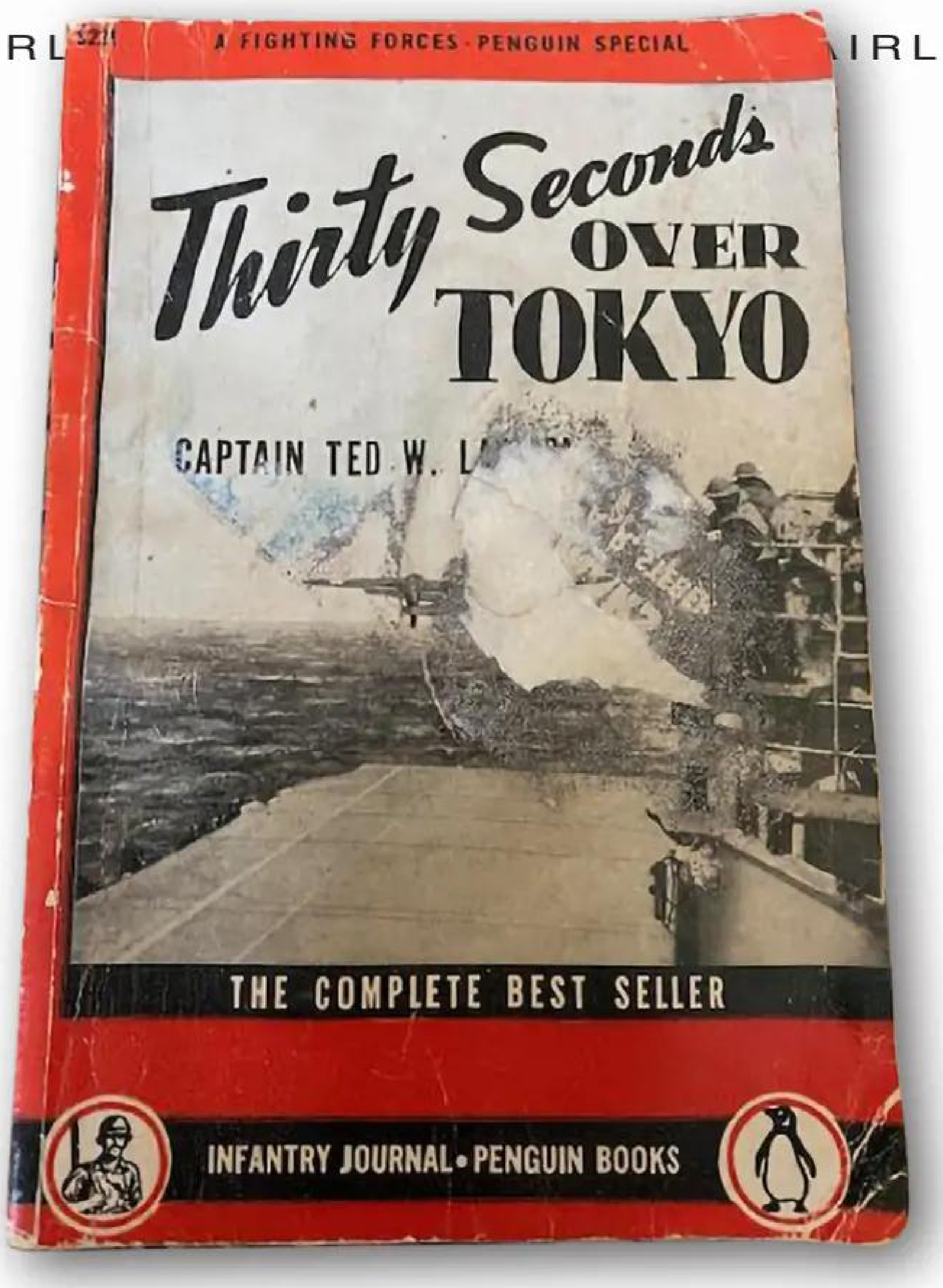
Flight Academy at the airfield and focused his attention on growing that business. In the meantime, N381AA has been moved around the field a number of times. It was first moved in front of the academy where it was going to be a restaurant. It was then moved to the academy's airside ramp; then across the field to a somewhat remote location, and I've heard it is back by the school ramp now. I have added a couple phiotos for the readers and hopefully this now rare airliner will survive.

Ralph M. Pettersen
Via email

I am adding another aircraft to the "Fill 'Er Up!" series. It is of an Ercoupe I photographed on California's fabled



The Ercoupe perched atop a liquor store on Highway 99. (S. Penning)


A FIGHTING FORCES · PENGUIN SPECIAL
Thirty Seconds OVER TOKYO
CAPTAIN TED W. L
THE COMPLETE BEST SELLER
INFANTRY JOURNAL · PENGUIN BOOKS

Cover of the Infantry Journal edition.

Highway 99, home of so many unusual roadside attractions. I do not remember what town the plane was in but it was during the late 1980s and as you can see by the bicentennial colors of the aircraft, the Ercoupe was probably painted up for 1976 celebrations.

Steve Penning
Via email

THIRTY SECONDS MEMORABILIA

As always, another great issue — the one magazine I read from cover to cover. I wanted to share a photo of my copy of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* that I had purchased in Portland at the famed Powell's Book Store some years ago. As you can see, it was an "Infantry Journal — Penguin Books" printing. Was this some sort of series?

Kenneth Brown
Via email

EDITOR'S NOTE: The book was part of a huge effort by the US government to provide servicemen and women with reading material. All sorts of books were included in the series, which was printed on wartime paper (actually of better quality than many books today) and made in a easy size to be carried by a serviceman. These books can usually be found for inexpensive prices and some collectors have attempted to gather the entire series, which runs well past a hundred volumes.

Since the article on restoring the B-25B came out in the last issue, I have found another movie in which the plane appeared. The film was *The Purple Heart*, a 1944 movie produced by Darryl F. Zanuck and starring Dana Andrews and Richard Conte. It is a dramatization of the show trial of captured Doolittle Raiders. Three of the crewmen were subsequently executed by the Japanese and one later died as a POW. The film was the first to deal directly with the savage Japanese treatment of POWs and ran into some opposition from the War Department, which was afraid that such films would provoke reprisals on the POWs by the Japanese government. Even today, the film still holds up.

Model work was used to represent the B-25 *Mrs. Murphy* but the B-25B fuselage was used for close-up filming of the crew. During the war, the studios were ordered by the government to share military resources as needed. If MGM had an aircraft, it was common for them to rent the plane to another studio. In this case, MGM had the B-25B from *A Guy Named Joe* and leased it to Fox for use in

AIR CLASSICS THE DIGITAL OPTION

North America's largest and most popular aviation history magazine is now available in a digital format. AIR CLASSICS has entered into partnership with POCKETMAGS to distribute digital subscriptions and back issues.

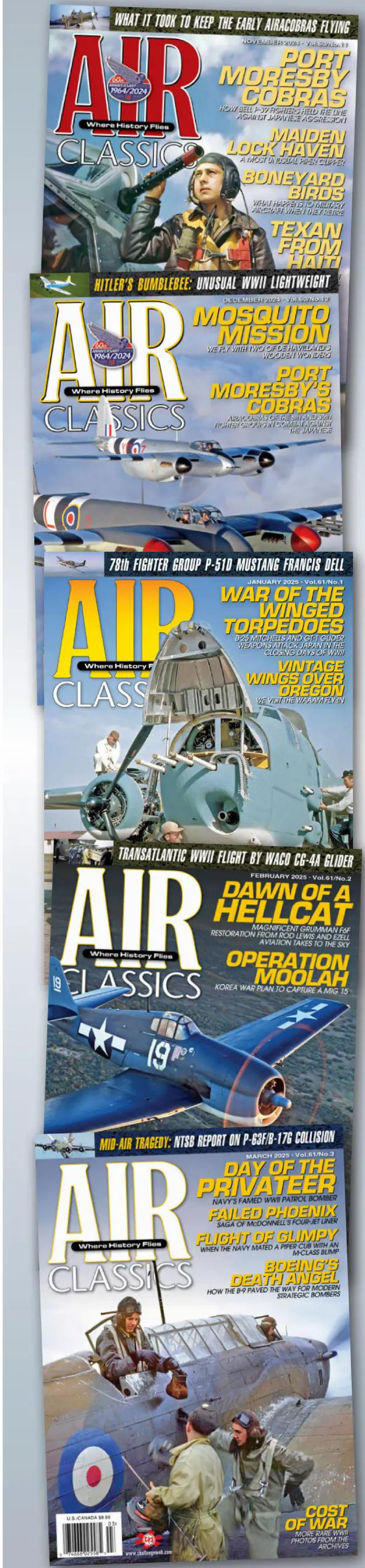
Please go to the official *pocketmags.com* website and you will get the "search bar" located near the center of the page. A search for AIR CLASSICS will take you to various options for digital subscriptions and back issues.

POCKETMAGS is an international website that allows subscription payment in a variety of currencies. They are professional and will quickly handle your needs.

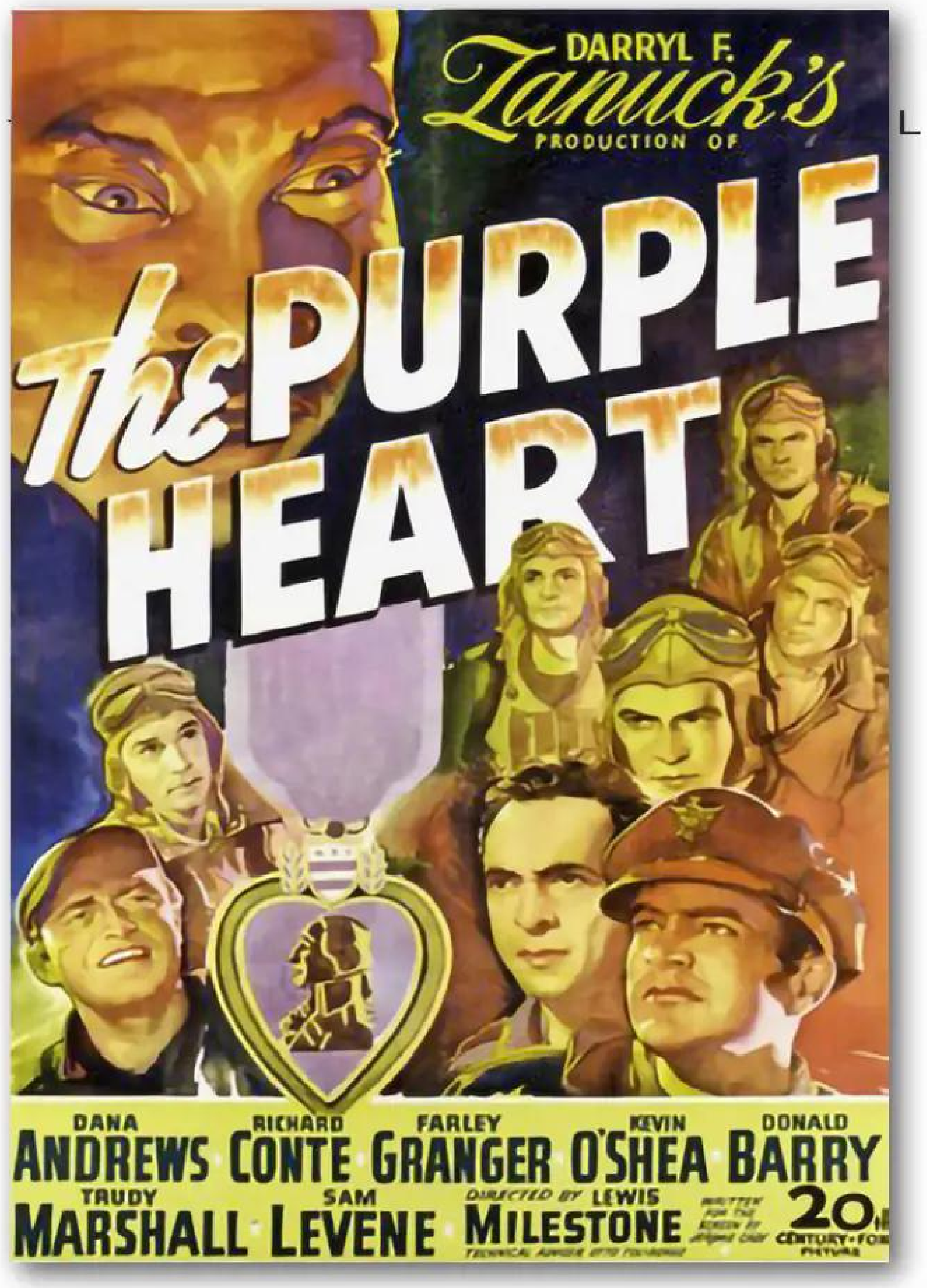
GO TO THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE AT *POCKETMAGS.COM.*

SWAMP CREATURE: MYSTERY OF THE EVERGLADES PB4Y
NOVEMBER 2023 · Vol.59/No.11
AIR CLASSICS
Where History Flies
EXCLUSIVE DIRECTORY! RENO UNLIMITEDS
SIX DECADES OF WINNERS!
THUNDERBIRD!
IS THIS THE WORLD'S FASTEST MUSTANG?
RETURN OF RACE 64
VICKY BENZING'S PLUM CRAZY
COLORS OF WAR
RARE WWII IMAGES
MID-AIR TRAGEDY CANCELS FINAL RENO AIR RACE
ALL THE LATEST VINTAGE & VETERAN AIRCRAFT NEWS
KEEPING THEM FLYING
VINTAGE V-12s' FUTURE OUTLOOK
BULLDOG!
GHOST OF ATKA ISLAND
MYSTERY OF THE EVERGLADES PRIVATEER
DOWN IN THE DESERT
CONSTELLATION
HALL BOATS FOR THE COASTIES

COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION!


AIR CLASSICS
PORT MORESBY COBRAS
MAIDEN LOCK HAVEN
BONEYARD BIRDS
TEXAN FROM HAITI
MOSQUITO MISSION
PORT MORESBY'S COBRAS
WAR OF THE WINGED TORPEDOES
VINTAGE WINGS OVER OREGON
DAWN OF A HELLCAT
OPERATION MOOLAH
DAY OF THE PRIVATEER
FAILED PHOENIX
FLIGHT OF GLIMPY
BOEING'S DEATH ANGEL
COST OF WAR

CALL 818-700-6868


DARRYL F. Zanuck's
PRODUCTION OF
The PURPLE HEART
DANA ANDREWS
RICHARD CONTE
FARLEY GRANGER
KEVIN O'SHEA
DONALD BARRY
TRUDY MARSHALL
SAM LEVENE
DIRECTED BY LEWIS MILESTONE
20th CENTURY-FOX PICTURE

Poster from *The Purple Heart*.

Actors in *The Purple Heart*.

Model work was used in the film for the B-25B named *Mrs. Murphy*. The actual B-25B was used for close-ups of the crew.

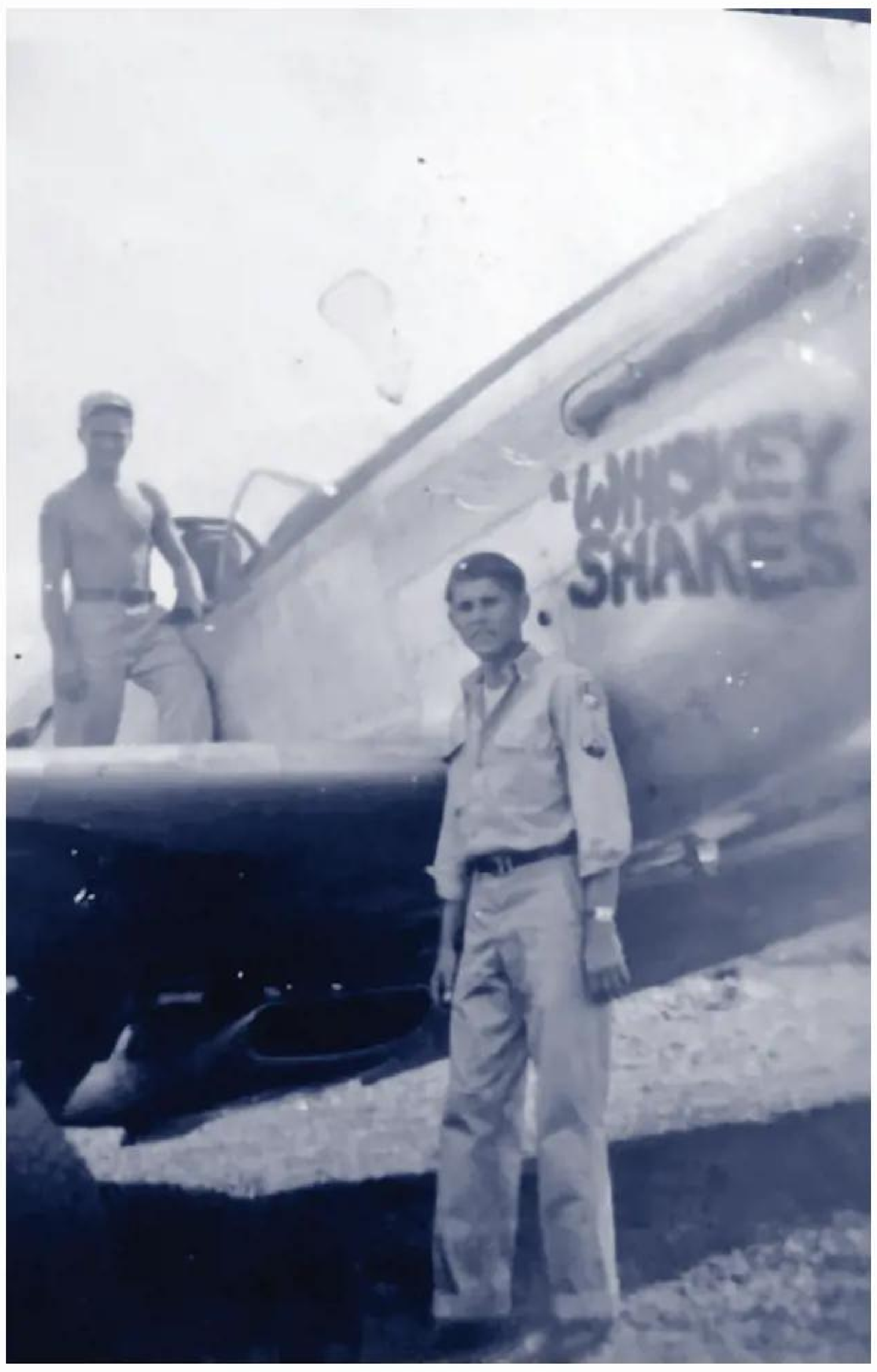
The Purple Heart. The production dates of these two films mesh perfectly. *A Guy Named Joe* was in production from 15 February 1943 to September 1943. *The Purple Heart* production was from 11 October 1943 to January 1944. From that point, the B-25B moved on to be used in *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*.

Bruce Orriss
Via email

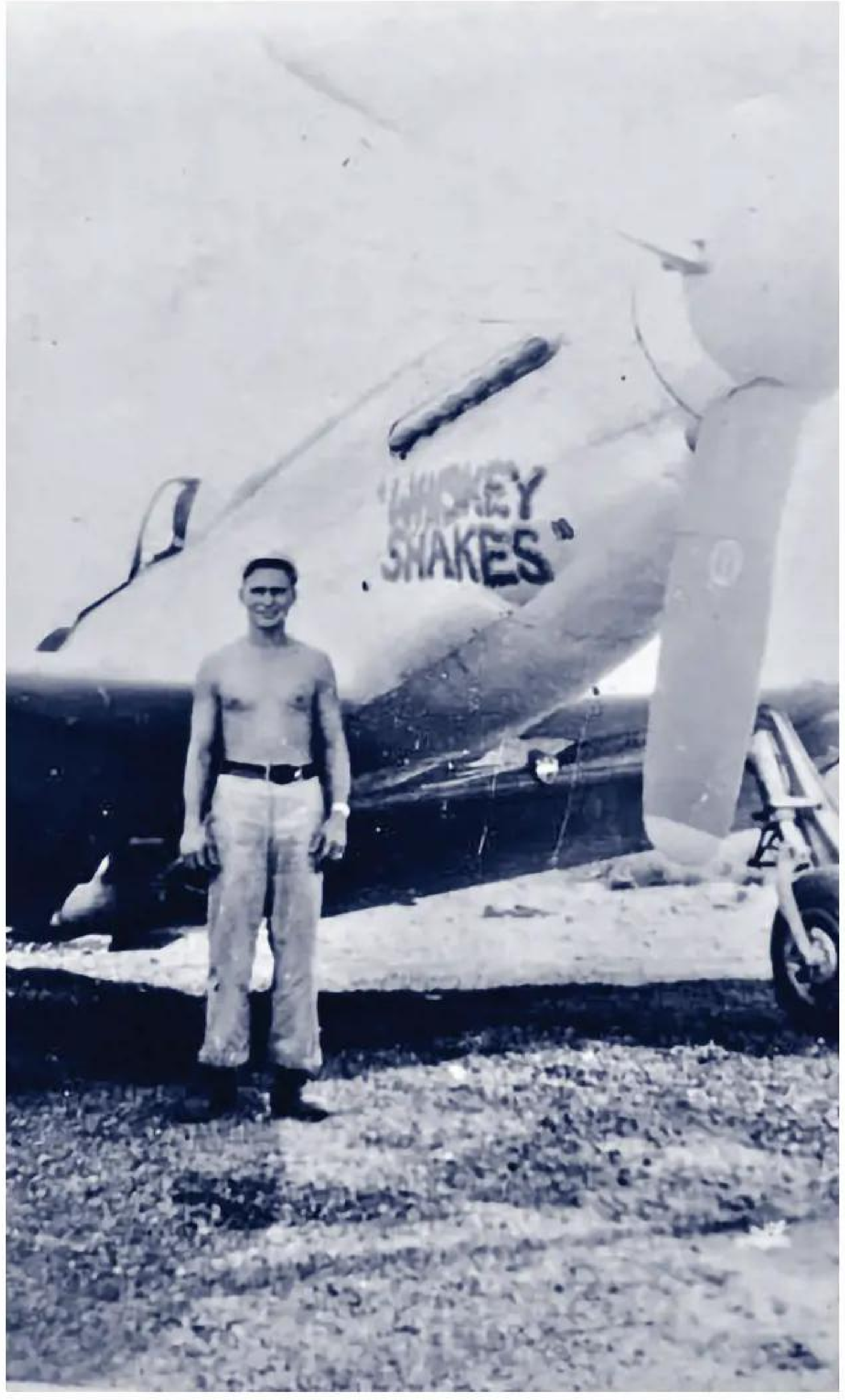
SEARCH FOR MUSTANG IDENTITY

I am hoping *Air Classics* readers can help me with these P-51 photos. I am trying to find any information concerning *“WHISKEY SHAKES.”* My good friend's father is the main person in the photos but my friend has zero information on the aircraft so I am appealing to knowledgeable readers to aid with identification.

Rick Centore
rcentore44@gmail.com **AC**

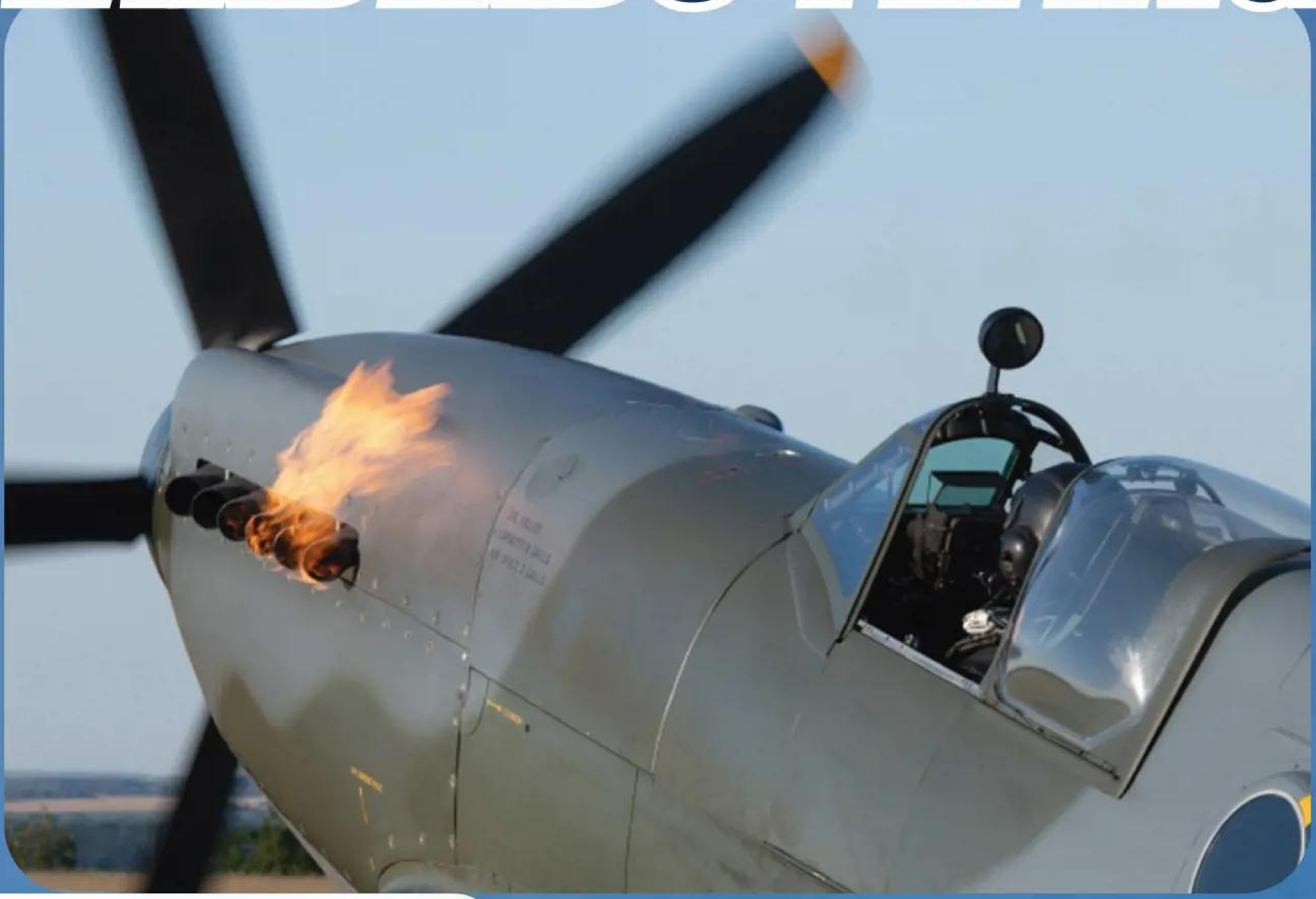

WHISKEY SHAKES

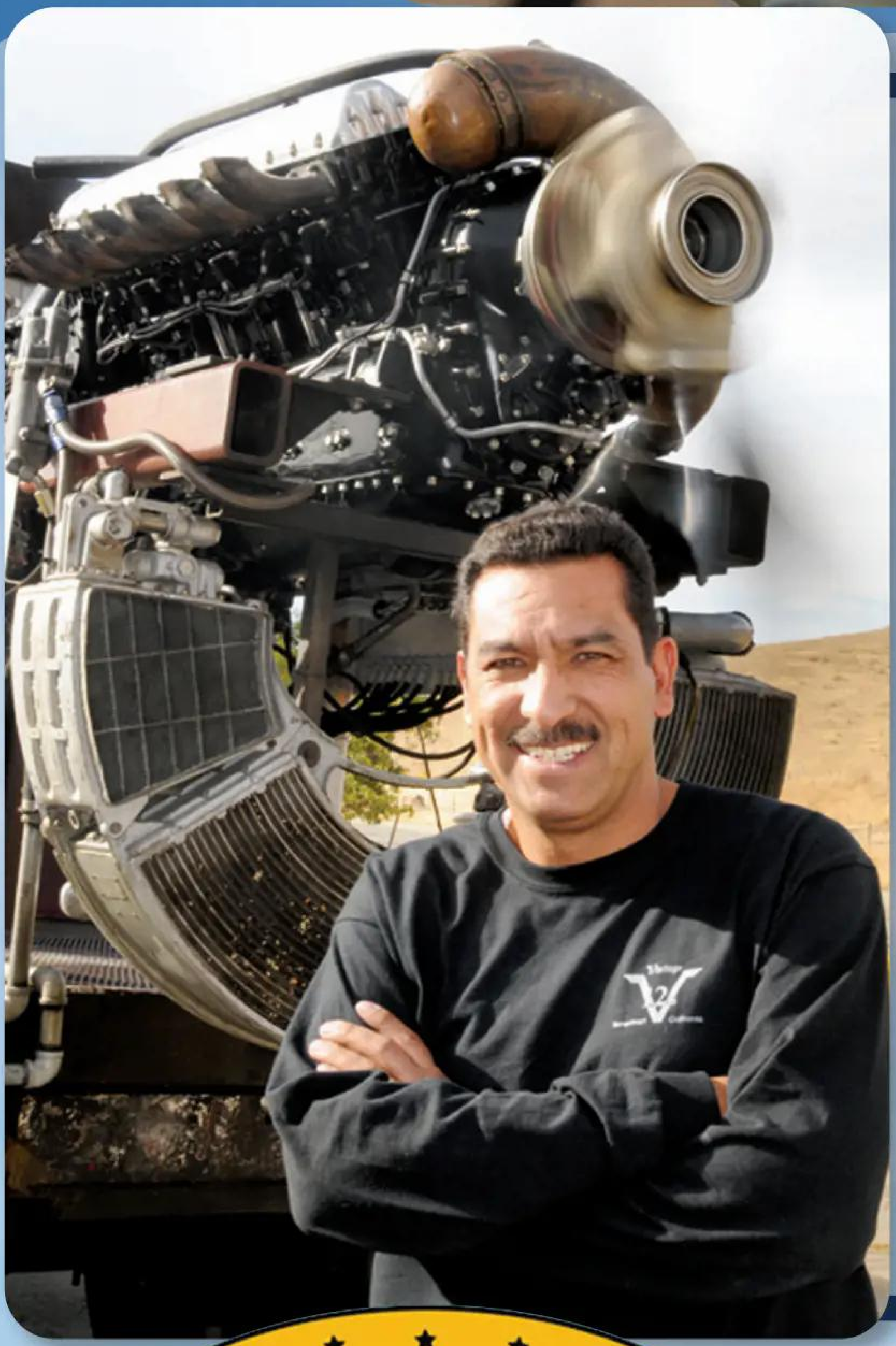
Unfortunately, we could not find any information in our files on the Mustang.


WHISKEY SHAKES

Another view of “*WHISKEY SHAKES*.”

WE KEEP THE WARBIRDS FLYING!





GRIFFON GROWL!

OUR OVERHAULED ROLLS-ROYCE GRIFFON V-12 ENGINES ARE KEEPING MANY OF THE WORLD'S LATE MODEL SUPERMARINE SPITFIRES FLYING ON A REGULAR BASIS

CONTACT: JOSE FLORES
VINTAGE V-12s, Inc.
1582 Goodrick Drive #1, Tehachapi, CA 93561
Phone: 661-822-3112 • Fax: 661-822-3120
VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.vintageV12s.com

BEECHCRAFT®
JRB-6
EXPEDITOR

BEECHCRAFT JRB-6 EXPEDITOR
PLANETAGS
JRB-6 EXPEDITOR GENUINE SKIN #0106 of 3,500 BuNo 39957
DOUGLAS C-124C GLOBEMASTER II
C-124C GLOBEMASTER II GENUINE SKIN #0101 of 3,500 SN: 51-0119
MCDONNELL NF-101A VOODOO
NF-101A VOODOO GENUINE SKIN #0126 of 3,000 SN: 53-2422
LOCKHEED L-749A CONSTELLATION
L-749A CONSTELLATION GENUINE SKIN #0117 of 7,500 Tail # N1552V
GENERAL MOTORS TBM-3E AVENGER
TBM-3E AVENGER GENUINE SKIN #100 of 700 BuNo 91436
OWN A PIECE OF HISTORY
GENUINE SKIN LIMITED EDITION

PlaneTags are created from authentic aviation skins.
Visit our collection at www.planetags.com or download the mobile app.

ANDROID APP ON Google play
Download on the App Store

PLANETAGS.COM

MOTOART PLANETAGS LLC | TORRANCE, CA 90501